

Singing a New New Song
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Romans 12:9-21 Psalm 96:1-13
April 12, 2009 (Easter)

- I. There are nine passages in the Bible that refer to singing a new song.
- A. We read one of them in our reading from Psalm 96 this morning. *Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.*
 - B. We find another of them in Psalm 98. *Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.*
 - C. And in Revelation, *the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*
 - D. Now when the Bible speaks of a new song it's referring to something more than just a combination of lyrics and melody that hasn't been sung before.
 - 1. Rather a new song is a triumphant song of rejoicing and praise that the people of God sing after He has delivered them from a time of stress.
 - a. Now in many cases in the Bible the new song did have new words because it referred to the most recent thing God had done for them.
 - (1) But the new words weren't what made it a new song.
 - (2) It was what God had done that made it a new song.
 - b. During their distress the people had sung, "Help us Lord! We're in big trouble. If you don't come to our assistance we're going down the tubes fast."
 - c. And then the new song said, "Wow, did you see that?! We have a great God! We need to proclaim God's praise to everyone!"
 - 2. A prime example of a new song is the song Israel sang after it escaped from Egypt by crossing the Red Sea—*I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.*
- II. On Easter we celebrate the fact that, in his resurrection, Jesus sang a new song.
- A. Now it's true that his whole ministry had been a new song.
 - 1. The people had been singing, "We need a Messiah. We need deliverance."

2. And the new song Jesus sang throughout his ministry was, “The Kingdom of God has come near! God has sent the Messiah!”
- B. But the new song Jesus sang on Easter went way beyond the new song he had been singing during his ministry.
1. It was a song that said, “Wow! Did you see that?! From death to life!”
 2. Jesus sang this new song not by any words or notes that came from his mouth, but by the simple, incredible act of rising from death to life.
 - a. It was indeed a new song.
 - b. A wonderful new song.
- C. *Paul picks up Jesus’s new song in Colossians 2:15 when he says, And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*
1. Paul’s claim that *He made a public spectacle of them* emphasizes Jesus’s triumph over *the powers and authorities* that was so completely revealed in his getting up and walking out of that tomb on Easter morning.
 2. Paul’s claim that *He made a public spectacle of them* means Jesus revealed Jerusalem and Rome and death to be totally impotent—unable to hold him, unable to suppress him.
 - a. As he arose on Easter Sunday Jesus said, “Jerusalem and Rome can flex their muscles all they want, but compared to the power of God, they have all the strength of strands of overcooked spaghetti.”
 - b. As he arose on Easter Sunday Jesus said, “Fatal wounds and death itself have no more hold than a dried-out rotten rubber band.”
 - c. As he arose on Easter Sunday Jesus said, “*Jerusalem and Rome and death are as powerful as a hamburger bun that got left out in a thunderstorm.*”
 - d. Their power is nothing compared to the power of God.
 3. But the really fascinating thing in Colossians 2:15 is that Paul says that Jesus achieved this triumph *over the powers and authorities by the cross*.
 - a. Now to us that’s usual terminology. We Christians see the cross as a source of power—mainly because of passages like this.
 - b. But that’s not how the cross was seen in the ancient world.
 - (1) In the ancient world the cross was a means of punishment, death, subjection and humiliation.
 - (2) The cross was a means by which downtrodden people were

put into their place of submission and humiliating defeat.

- c. Powerful authorities forced others to submit to the cross—killing them cruelly—*letting them know who was boss*.
 - d. So to speak of *triumphing over those exact powerful authorities by submitting to, rather than forcing others to submit to*, the cross is completely asinine.
 - e. It's about like saying (in today's world) that the pitcher won the game by wearing handcuffs.
 - f. Which is an absolutely nonsensical thing to say.
 - (1) Pitchers don't win games by wearing handcuffs.
 - (a) You can't pitch with your hands bound together.
 - (b) You can't field or bat or run wearing handcuffs.
 - (2) Being required to submit to handcuffs in any context is a sign of defeat and humiliation.
 - (3) It is brainless to think of them as a means of triumph.
 - (4) And it is no less absurd to think of triumphing over anyone or anything by (submitting to) the (instrument of torture and humiliation known as the) cross.
 - (5) But that is exactly what Paul claims here.
4. The incredible point Paul is making is that Jesus achieved his *triumph over the powers and authorities on Sunday morning by what happened on the cross on Friday afternoon*.
- a. And what happened on Friday afternoon did not appear to be a resounding victory.
 - b. Indeed, it was what appeared to be an ignoble defeat.
- D. And that raises an incredible unexpected aspect of Jesus's new song.
- 1. It is a new kind of new song with an unexpected twist to it.
 - a. A twist that says you win by submitting to what seems to be humiliation and defeat in the world's eyes.
 - b. It's a twist that says your strength is in your weakness.
 - 2. Jesus sang a new new song on Easter.
 - a. Yes, it was a song of God's wonderful triumph.
 - b. But it was also a song that emphasized the counter-intuitive way that God triumphs over the forces of death and darkness.
 - (1) A way that triumphs through death on a cross.
 - (2) A way that finds its strength in weakness.
 - 3. Paul mentions this counter-intuitive point in *2 Corinthians 13:4* where he says, *For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to*

serve you.

- a. Now here we find the key to the incredible oxymoronic truth that Paul has identified—that access to the power of God is found in laying aside the world’s ways of exercising power.
 - (1) From the world’s perspective submitting to the cross was weakness leading to incredible defeat.
 - (2) But from God’s perspective, laying aside the world’s way of exercising power was the key to receiving God’s power.
 - b. The way we access God’s power is to choose that power over the seeming superiority of the world’s power.
 - (1) And when we do that, the world often perceives it as weakness—like when Jesus chose the cross rather than leading a revolt against the Romans.
 - (2) Now although we think of not using the seemingly superior methodologies of the world as a startling new idea unique to the NT, we find this concept already in the OT.
 - (a) For example when Israel started marching around Jericho once a day rather than mounting a full-fledged military siege of the city the world thought “What a namby-pamby ‘ring around the rosy’ strategy!”
 - i) But it worked!
 - ii) It may have been namby-pamby in world’s eyes, but it laid hold of God’s power.
 - (b) It was only when Israel gave up its attempts at winning its own battles through its own power that God could achieve his victory.
 - (3) And that is exactly what Jesus did as he submitted to the cross, so that God could win the triumph over the powers and authorities.
- E. Many Christians fail to grasp this truth about the new new song that Jesus sang and expects us to sing.
1. They like the power of this world.
 - a. They want to be the ones driving the nails and dominating others.
 - b. The church has stumbled over this issue ever since the conversion of Constantine led it to the unholy alliance of church and state.
 2. But nothing about this alliance of church and state has changed the basic truth that God’s power is available by laying aside the world’s forms of power and domination in order to sing Jesus’s new new song of triumphing over *the powers and authorities by the cross.*
- III. Now there are several accounts in the NT of how we, the followers of Jesus, should join in singing Jesus’s new new song as we live in the midst of the kingdom of the world, and I want to spend just a few moments with the account we read this morning from

Romans.

- A. This is an incredibly rich passage that outlines what it means to “Sing songs of the kingdom in the midst of the kingdom of the world.”
1. It says wonderful things like *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, and Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*
 2. It is far too rich for us to examine in any detail at all.
 3. But I want us to especially notice six points from vv. 17-21.
- B. First, there are three things from the power of this world that we are not to do.
1. First, *17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil.*
 - a. Do not hurt someone for hurting you.
 - b. As Jesus says in Sermon on Mount, *Do not resist an evil person.*
 2. *Second, 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*
 - a. It is not our job to settle accounts—for God or for ourselves.
 - b. We are to leave the settling of accounts in God’s hands.
 3. *Third, 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
 - a. When someone hurts you don’t become overwhelmed with plots of revenge which will only multiply evil.
 - b. Instead respond in a positive way, allowing God’s power to work as it did on Easter morning, simmering down and perhaps winning and converting the perpetrator of evil rather than destroying him.
 4. These three “do nots” are part of singing Jesus’s new new song of Easter.
- C. And then there are three things that we are to do.
1. *First, 17 Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. Based on what else we read in this passage, what is right is to live in love and harmony.*
 2. Second, v. 18 expands on that by saying, *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
 3. And then v. 20 takes things to the new new song level of saying, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*
 - a. Lay aside the usual repertoire of responses to enemies of fighting and killing and revenge.
 - b. Instead do good to an enemy—feed him, give him drink.
 - c. Win him over by the good you do to him rather than destroy him by the evil you do to him.
 4. In this way you will be singing the new new song of Easter.

- IV. Although not often proclaimed on Easter, the new new song Jesus sang that morning is the song of *triumphing by the cross*, of triumphing over the forces of evil and death and destruction by submitting to them in order that God may exercise his power over them.
- A. It is common for people to feel such behavior is foolish or unnecessary, but the message of Easter is that it works.
1. Our power lies not in our attempting to wield the power of the world on God's behalf, exercising evil on our enemies, striving to defeat and shame them, but in our weakness, allowing God to exercise his power.
 2. Our power lies in accepting the model of Jesus that we are not to be the ones driving the nails and putting others on crosses.
 3. Rather our power lies in being people of love, caring and peace who are willing to lay aside the world's tools of power to have access to God's power.
- B. And we celebrate that power on Easter as we join with Jesus in singing his new new song.