Psalm 145

A Faith That Sings

The Summit Church, Psalms

MPT: In David's final words in Scripture, he gives God's people an expression of God's worth, generational faithfulness, and our fitting reaction—praise!

MPS: Singing is one of the primary and most beneficial God-ordained ways we worship God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

INTRODUCTION

Third and final week of *Psalms* of David...

- Week one: Kyle Mercer: Life is Hard; God is Good
- Week two: Pastor Bryan talked about <u>crisis</u>...
 - Bring your feelings to God
 - Remember facts about God
 - Respond in faith to God

Pastor Bryan pointed out that one of the main ways we respond in faith, even in hard times, is by **rejoicing and** <u>singing</u>. I wanna take that final baton from Pastor Bryan's message last weekend and run a few laps with it today: continuing to look at King David's life, but particularly how he viewed <u>singing</u> as an ultimate act of worship. Turn to Psalm 145...

Favorite genres of music?

- Pop ("w/e is popular is fine")
- Classic rock (Zeppelin, Stones, Pink Floyd, Eagles)
- Heavy metal rock
- Rap (I'm an ATLien. If you don't get that, don't worry about it.)
- R&B (y'all better be married)

- "Chill": classical, jazz, blues
- Country (Where my NC State folks?...I'm a North GA boy...)
- Christian ("nothing secular in my house")

Every **culture**. Every **continent**. Every **person** enjoys music on one level or another. To the point that the American poet, **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** said, "Music is the universal language of mankind."

Obviously as a pastor I would argue one of the most important things you do as a follower of Jesus every single week is to gather together for worship services...and one of the main things we do during our time is SING to God. Almost \(\frac{1}{3} \) of our service every week is spent SINGING. You ever thought about that? Ever thought about why?

Even non-Christians have discovered the benefits of singing—study after study has shown how singing is good for you in **essentially every area of life**¹:

- It releases endorphins into your system and makes you feel energized.
- People who sing are healthier than people who don't—works out your lungs, reduces breathing problems, and improves quality of life.
- Singing has even been shown to prolong life, including in cancer patients. For folks with Alzheimer's or dementia, listening to or singing songs can provide emotional and behavioral benefits.
- Music therapy can help lower anxiety and stress.
 - (Unless it's the newest Disney movie soundtrack my kids put on repeat, in which case it <u>adds</u> anxiety and stress to my household. ALEXA, PLEASE STOP.)

¹Mayo Clinic. The Health Benefits of Singing. Music: The Universal Language.

Think about the highest moment of a worship experience you've ever had—a time when you've sung and poured your heart out to God in praise and your heart has literally exploded with gratitude and joy...now multiply that by infinity and you have a *slight glimpse* of what worship in heaven w/b like for you—every glimpse of heaven we get in the Scriptures consists of the throne of God with angels, saints, and heavenly creatures gathered around the throne praising God. It's gonna be an eternal range of emotion and experience like never before!

 We recently took our oldest two kids to an amusement park for their first roller coaster rides...I imagine heavenly worship for us will be something like this range of emotion: PIC_Avi roller
 coaster

Which brings us back to Psalm 145. . . Psalm 145, as we're gonna see, gives God's people an **expression of God's worth**, a **reminder of his faithfulness to all generations**, and, the thing we're going to focus on today, it gives what our fitting reaction should be to his greatness: **SINGING IN PRAISE**.

Psalm 145 (stand and read first 3 verses together)

¹I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

²Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

³Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

PRAY: Give us hearts fully given and surrendered to you in praise. If we call you Lord and Savior, would our lives be filled with singing because of your salvation.

CONTEXT

As a church we've been looking at the *life* of David in 1/2

Samuel...and the last few weeks we've looked at the *heart* of David from the Psalms. Out of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, David wrote almost *half* of them, with Psalm 145 actually being the last one written by him...in fact, Psalm 145 presents the <u>final words</u> we have written by him.

 Psalm 145, as one theologian put it, is "a fit summary of all David had learned about God during a long lifetime of following hard after the Almighty [God]."²

If you were writing a book for God, what would be the focus of your final chapter? What would you want your final words to say to your readers be? For David, that answer came easy: he chose to focus on the plethora of reasons we have for praising God...specifically through song. David's final words were:

- Here's **who** we praise—the **Lord**.
- Here's why we praise him—he's awesome and Almighty.
- Here's how we praise him—through song.

David came to realize there's something about singing that actually helps us become more like God (which is the goal of following Jesus!).

• **Zephaniah 3:17** says, "The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with

•

² James Montgomery Boice

- gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will **exult over you** with loud singing."
- If God is a singing God, we should be a singing people!

Even theologians like **Luther** felt strongly about singing: "A person who...does not regard [music] as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed ... he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of [donkeys] and the grunting of hogs."³

 I'm not sure we should imitate Luther's attitude, but we do want to imitate his passion for singing—because God himself is passionate about singing.

Before we get too far down the road, I need to clear up <u>one major</u> misconception about singing in church: Music ≠ worship

- Worship includes cultivating a personal relationship with God, praising God together with other Christians, and honoring God with our everyday lives.
- One of the main ways we worship is through music. But, even when we gather together for services, worship is everything we do: it's the sermon, the singing, the prayer, the giving...all of it.
- (Which, BTW, some of the key folks who help us put services together are our WL's...and can we just pause and thank our campus worship leaders/teams/vols...)

God is so passionate about singing, he *commands* it of his people. The Bible contains over *400 references to singing* and *50 direct commands to sing*.

 Psalm 47:6, Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

- Psalm 95:1, Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
- Psalm 96:1, Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!
- **Psalm 149:1**, Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Here's this thing that we spend 1/3 of our services engaged in, simultaneously told by one of the greatest saints to ever live—King David—that it's arguably the primary way we praise God...so what's the big deal with singing? What does this have to do with you and your everyday life? How does this help you follow Jesus? What does music/singing help us do? Very simply: Why should we sing?

WALKTHROUGH: Why should we sing?

1) Singing Embeds Truth In Our Minds

What this means is that it doesn't just matter *that* we sing; it actually matters *what* we sing. Just look at the glorious truths about God that are jam-packed in David's song...v8:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹The LORD is **good to all**, and his **mercy is over all** that he has made.

¹⁰All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!

¹¹They shall speak of the **glory of your kingdom** and tell of your **power**,

³ Luther, "Preface to Georg Rhau's Symphoniae iucundae," LW 53, cited by Buszin in "Luther on Music," The Musical Quarterly 32, no. 1 [1946]: 85.

¹²to make known to the children of man your **mighty deeds**, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. [The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.]

After everything David has been through in life—the pains, heartaches, betrayals, struggles, waiting, doubt—he chooses to entrench the truths he knows about God deeper in his heart and mind through the medium of song. He praises God for his grace, mercy, patience, steadfast love (hesed!), goodness, glory, kingdom, power, providence, faithfulness, kindness.

 David knows we'll never approach right feeling toward God if we don't begin with right facts about him. (Remember last week when Pastor Bryan said "facts should be the driver of your car, not feelings.")

This is why **Colossians 3:16** says to Let the <u>word of Christ</u> 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.

This means the majority of the lyrics we sing should be about <u>God's</u> Word, God's character, God's works, God's gospel.

- The truths that will sustain us during seasons of crisis while also allowing us to shout for joy on the mountaintops are truths about GOD.
- It's <u>the Word of Christ</u> that's to dwell in us richly as we sing—not <u>musical experiences</u> or <u>emotional highs</u>. Not even <u>creativity</u> or someone's <u>talents</u> or <u>giftings</u> on a stage or <u>amazing voice</u> which should dwell in us richly.

- It's less, "I will love you forever, God" and more "God, you've proven your love for me forever on the cross!"
- All true worship is a response to God's self-revelation in Christ and Scripture.
- Gordon Fee: "Show me a church's songs and I'll show you their theology."

What you sing matters because singing helps you remember theology, which, in turn, helps you consciously and subconsciously call to mind truths about God when you need them the most.

Isn't this what good songs do?--they embed themselves in your mind. It's why you never forget words to some songs...when I say:

- Now this is a story all about how...
- We will, we will...
- Musical memory is why we all know we're supposed to shake
 it like a Polaroid picture...or that if he really liked it then he
 shoulda put a ring on it.
- Whether we like it or not, these things are seared in our brains because that's the power of music!
- It's the reason an Alzheimer's patient sadly can't remember their **spouse** or **children** but can remember songs from their childhood.

When it comes to following Jesus, what singing can do for us is embed truths about God in our minds. In **Deuteronomy 31**, God himself used music to help the Israelites remember the words he had spoken to them. Just as Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to teach Israel a song to remember the words he told them.⁴

⁴ Deut. 31:19, 21

It's because <u>singing helps us remember words</u>...and what more important words to remember than the Words of life?! **We cannot love a Christ who we don't know.** Our worship *of God* is always a response to the *Word of God*. The question we should ask ourselves is *if the teaching in our church was limited to the song we sing, how well would we know God? How much would we know about God?*

• A church that desires to be Spirit-led will first be Word-fed.

But singing doesn't just engage our **heads**, it also engages our **hearts**...

2) Singing Engages Us Emotionally

Pastor Bryan talked a lot about this last week: about how David knew what it meant to be in a **time of crisis**, yet would simultaneously find his heart **leaping for joy** because of God's steadfast love—his *hesed*.

And in David's final praises of **Psalm 145** this remains as true as it was in **Psalm 13** from last week. Look at v14...

¹⁴The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you, and **you give them their food in due** season.

Now, there are two scenarios where you will see me at my worst:

- 1. **Sweating** while dressed up.
- 2. **Hungry**. I don't get hungry, I get hangry.

Hot and hungry are bad combos for me. Summer weddings are basically my nightmare. But you wanna be my best friend for a day?...just text me and say, "Headed your way and stopping to grab

something to eat...what you want?" That's it. We're instant BFF's. The way to my heart is through my stomach. I may be **simple**, but I'm **not** ashamed of it.

David says of God in v15, "You give them their food in due season." IOW, "You feed us at the exact right time, God! You're better than Door Dash, Uber Eats, and GrubHub combined (and you don't charge me \$48 in delivery fees)."

Let me ask you: Ever felt spiritually hungry...or even empty? You show up to church spiritually "hot and hungry," but then all of a sudden God gives you the right song or the right word or the right encouragement or the right person to speak a word of life into you and in one conversation or one song or one word you feel like you've been filled with an emotion and a sustenance you had previously been missing? That's God "giving you food in due season." It's what he does! Because, v16 says, "God, "Go

David is writing his final chapter and he thinks it's important enough to write it as a praise song to God...because he knows, regardless of your circumstances, regardless of your situation, regardless of your crises, regardless of how hot and hungry you might be, there's a satisfaction, a peace, a joy, a contentment, that comes when we sing the praises of our God. There's a desire that is filled inside of us when we worship God rightly—v19: ¹⁹He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.

Singing bridges the gap between the **truth in our heads** and the **emotions in our hearts**...and when we **express these truths outwardly in song** they end up **affecting us inwardly in our emotions**.

We see this all throughout Scriptures—how singing affects us emotionally:

- In 1 Samuel 16 it says whenever a harmful spirit would come upon King Saul, David would bust out his harp and the spirit would depart and Saul would be "refreshed" and "would feel better."
- In 2 Samuel 6 when the ark of the Lord is brought into Jerusalem signifying the presence of God amongst his people, David "danced before the Lord with all his might!"
- In **Matthew 11** Jesus refers to music that makes people want to dance or mourn.
- In John 4 when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well she
 has some questions about worship...and Jesus summarizes his
 theology of worship by telling her we're called to worship in
 both spirit and truth.

Spirit and truth...you say, "Well I just don't feel anything toward God when we sing in church." Perhaps your issue is less of an "emotional" one and more of a "truth" one. You haven't fully grasped the truths you're singing about, so they're not affecting you emotionally at all. Again, you can't feel a love for a Savior who you don't truly know.

Think of singing as both heat and light. This is awful, but did you ever burn ants with a magnifying glass as a kid? (Maybe you thought it was animal cruelty when you were a kid. I thought it was a science experiment on the cause and effect of heat and light. Why do kids burn ants?, you ask...cuz kids are knuckleheads, that's why. There is no explanation. If your 8 year old son is burning ants while laughing maniacally, maybe you have a problem. But for most kids they're just morons who like fire. Simple as that.)

Think of worship like heat and light (I know I'm trying to go from morbid ant killing to singing and glorifying God...I just got back from student camp, so bear with me). The truth from God's Word is the light...and that light of the truth about God is magnified by our singing...which then ignites a flame of emotion in our hearts (some of you Enneagram 8's begin to sing in church and you're like, "Oh, gosh, what's happening right now?" It's called emotions...that's what's happening.)

Christianity is more than just right thinking about God. It's also right feeling toward him. We're not here to just pump your head full of facts about God; it's not just education about how to follow Jesus...it's exultation in following Jesus—it's a triumphant, heart-bursting joy that comes from knowing Jesus has secured the victory of your salvation on the cross. So:

- Songs about victory (truth) make us shout in joy (emotion).
- Songs about salvation (truth) make us weep in gratitude (emotion).
- Songs of remembrance (truth) give us strength in suffering (emotion).
- Songs of **reverence** (truth) leave us in **awe** of God's greatness (emotion).

Singing engages us emotionally. However, we need to be careful to not confuse **emotions** with **emotional**-*ism*. Let's not confuse **feelings produced** *by music we love* with **feelings produced** by *truths about God we worship*.

 Churches like ours can take a lot of criticism about "trying to conjure up emotions," so let me be clear on this: we don't pursue feelings as ends in themselves. The goal in singing isn't to get you to feel something—that's emotionalism.

- Emotionalism assumes that feelings are the primary sign of God's presence. They're not. The gospel is our proof of God's presence.
- We don't sing about God's greatness until we get emotional; we become emotional while singing and focusing on the greatness of our God. Emotions aren't the goal...they're just responses to the truths we're singing about God.
- Let's not be more moved by the singing itself than the truth with which it's conveying.

In church, we need both **truth** *and* **emotion**...it's **both/and** not **either/or**:

- Truth without emotion can become **cold religion**.
- On the flip side, emotion without truth can become **idolatry**.

Here's kind of a litmus test during singing as to whether you're worshiping **God** or the **experience**:

- Do you respond more to an arrangement of a song than to the content of it?
 - You only 'feel' God during big loud bridges of songs that crescendo and have pithy lyrics.
- Do you only connect with God through what you subjectively deem "good music?" Do you care more about how the song makes you feel than what it has to say?

Let's be careful we're not worshiping our preferences more than our Savior. But let's also realize that our Savior, rightly worshiped in truth, will inevitably lead to our emotions being stirred.

 If sunsets and oceans and canyons and food and football games can make our hearts sing, how much more should our hearts BURST by even just a glimpse of Jesus? Singing engages our heads, our hearts, and it also engages one another...

3) Singing Encourages One Another

Be honest: How many of you have ever come into church and not "felt" like singing?

One of the most important things singing does is this: it encourages one another in the faith. David would go as far as to say our singing impacts the next generation...look at v4:

⁴One generation shall commend your works to another,

and shall declare your mighty acts.

⁵On the glorious splendor of your majesty,

and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

⁶They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,

and I will declare your greatness.

⁷They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

One of the most amazing things about corporate worship is **the way it** seeks to build up the whole body of believers. As we praise God corporately, we build one another up individually.⁵

- David says we <u>commend</u>, we <u>declare</u>, we <u>meditate</u>, we <u>speak</u>, we <u>sing aloud</u> of God's **goodness** and <u>righteousness</u> and <u>deeds</u>...and as we do, there's something that happens to those around us that reverberates even into the next generation.
- The Spirit comes down vertically (so to speak), when we encourage one another by singing horizontally.

⁵ https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-theology-and-corporate-worship/

The NT would say it like this in **Ephesians 5:18-20**, "...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, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

As we are **filled with the Spirit** (vertically) we turn our **attention to one another** (horizontally) and **speak and sing** <u>to one another</u> in order to **encourage** and **build one another up** in the faith. You may have never thought about this, but that's why some of the best hymns we sing are *corporate* rather than *individual*:

- "A mighty fortress is *our* God."
- "How deep the Father's love for us."
- "What a friend we have in Jesus."

Colossians 3:16 doubles down on this: 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.

See, you may not be singing cuz you think you'll be an **annoyance** to the person next to you; the Bible is telling you that **to not sing is to actually** *hinder* **the person next to you,** cuz they need to be encouraged and built up!

 Scientists have even found that singing corporately produces a chemical change in our bodies that contributes to a sense of bonding.

What's unique about the *church's* weekly gathering—opposed to, say, a gathering of college students at a basketball game all singing the same song together—is that when we worship in song we're building one another up.

 When you go to a college basketball game and you participate in the chants and songs, you're trying to spur your team on to win, right? (Or you're chanting to degrade and ridicule the other team, of course.)

When we gather together as the people of God we're not coming to sing and cheer on God in his fight against Satan—he's already won! God doesn't need our encouragement. You know who does? The person sitting near to you.

- The person who lost their job this week needs to hear you sing about <u>God as provider</u> and be reminded that's who God is.
- The student whose parents are going through a divorce right now needs to hear you sing about how <u>God will always be</u> <u>near them</u> and be reminded that's who God is.
- The mom who feels like she's terrible at motherhood cuz her kids barely made it to church this morning alive cuz she almost murdered them and they've eaten nothing but crap food all week cuz it's all they'll eat and who've already had way too much screen time today but how else is momma supposed to get a break at all?!, she needs to hear you sing about how God sees her, God knows her, God loves her, God cares about every minute detail in her and her kid's lives...and through your singing she needs to be reminded that's who God is.

A church where folks **passively absorb** whatever's happening "on the stage" while **sitting back and "enjoying the show"** is a church that is completely missing out on the **aim** and **effects of singing** and the **encouragement we're meant to be to one another.**

When we're singing corporately, we're cheering one another on saying, "Listen to these praises! Delight your soul in the Lord! Take comfort in his promises! You're not alone in this fight for the faith!"

Lastly, it not only encourages one another, but...

4) Singing Expresses Our Unity in the Gospel

When I think about this, I can't help but think about our Men's Conference earlier this year. Men from all over—different campuses, different colors, different backgrounds, different languages, different styles, different preferences, different voices—all singing together in praise of ONE NAME. Different in more ways than we could count, but singing to express the unity we have in the gospel.

See, Jesus didn't die to only have those with amazing voices sing and worship him; he died to **redeem a universal choir.** We are **united by the blood of Christ,** not by **our ability to lead a solo**. Scripture says to make a **joyful** noise to the Lord; not a **perfect one!**

 When it comes to singing the question isn't, "Do you have a voice?" The question is, "Do you have a song?"

And if you've repented of your sins and trusted in the finished work of Christ as your Savior—if you've traded your sin for his righteousness, been reconciled to God, experienced his goodness and grace and mercy—then you have a song!

- You have the song of the **gospel**.
- You have the song of the redeemed.
- You have the song of being part of the family of God.
- You have the song of mercy.
- You have the song of grace.

Listen: every voice in the church matters.

- God deserves praise, so we sing!
- Your brother/sister in Christ needs your encouragement, so we sing!
- Jesus is worthy of all of our worship, so we sing!

I'm not telling how to sing...I know some of you more charismatic and expressive worshipers right now are like, "YES! All you ppl who refuse to lift your hands or shout while singing...why can't you just love Jesus like I do?!"

Before you get all **high and mighty**, let's realize that a mature church—a unified church—will learn to pull both the **expressive** and the **reserved** worship closer together, moving toward more wholeness and unity <u>in Christ</u>.

- It's easy in today's church culture to feel like if you're not someone who jumps and shouts and flys hands all over the place it's easy to feel guilty, cuz these days it seems like being a "successful" Christian is equated with being expressive and emotion driven.
- But maybe you grew up learning that God is holy and so the way you revere him in worship is not by standing and shouting but by kneeling in awe and reverence.

Singing *together* gives us the opportunity to express our <u>unity in Christ</u> by loving the Lord God with all our **HEART** (emotions), soul, **MIND** (truths about God), and strength. This is not an either/or, it's a both/and.

(VAMP)

This means **our unity is in the gospel**; not in our **musical preferences**. The only reason our worship is acceptable to God in the first place is because of the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf—because of the gospel. Our voices of worship reach God on the wings of **Jesus' sacrifice**; not on the wings of our **talent or righteousness**. So our unity is not in **style**; it's in our **Savior**.

Sure, music can move us, but only Jesus can save us.⁶

- Music can't pay for our sins and reconcile us to God. Only Jesus can.
- Music can't raise us from the dead. Only Jesus can.
- Music can't defeat Satan. Only Jesus can.
- Music can't bring us into God's presence. Only Jesus can.
- Music can't transform our hearts. Only Jesus can.
- Music can't restore our losses. Only Jesus can.

Which is why <u>David's final penned words</u> in the Bible are these:

CONCLUSION (bands load)

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

David doesn't talk about his **conquests**. He doesn't talk about his **power or position**. He doesn't talk about his **legacy**. His mouth is resolved to speak <u>and SING</u> the praise of the Lord forever and ever.

David's battle weapon in life is not a **sling and a stone**, it's not an **army** at his command, it's not a **sword**...it's a harp of 10 strings; it's a voice of praise.

If you're feeling **weak** or **discouraged** today, and when you look around at the tools at your disposal you get discouraged asking:

- Am I smart enough?
- Do I have enough courage?
- Do I know enough of the Bible?
- How could God love me?

Hear me: <u>your strength is not in your skills</u>; it's in your <u>song</u>. You don't need to be courageous or <u>smart or Bible-savvy</u>...<u>as long as you've</u> got a song, you've got strength at your disposal.

- Sing about the magnitude of God's glory and grace.
- Sing about his awesome wisdom and power.
- Sing about his patience and faithfulness.
- Sing about his steadfast—hesed—love toward us.
- Sing about his perfection and holiness and righteousness.
- Sing and be encouraged by his constant presence.

That's what Spirit-filled, blood-bought, Jesus-obsessed, grace-given believers do: they sing. They sing *about* God, and they sing *to one another*.

And one day in heaven, even after we've been there ten thousand years, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun! May the mouth of TSC speak the praise of the Lord and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

Summit family, let's stand together and sing to our great God. (Doxology?)

⁶ Kauflin, <u>Good Music Can Become Your God</u>