

Psalm 95

“From Nothing comes Everything”

21st Sunday af. Pentecost

October 18, 2015

Our Redeemer

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

[Introduction] The Hawkeyes are 6 and 0 for the season, and
the game this weekend was broadcast on ABC – channel 9.
That means I could watch it.

And you know, watching it on TV –

Well, your not too cold and your not too hot,
you have a good seat, and
the crowd around you is well behaved.
(I cannot believe some of the things they say at Kinnick)

BUT ... watching it on TV is not the same as going in person.
In person, you really get caught up in the excitement.

- As you walk from your parking spot closer and closer to the stadium,
the parking price goes up and up.
- As you near the stadium, the crowds increase.
- As you sit in the stadium and the team runs on the field or a dramatic
touchdown is made, the crowds cheer emphatically.

I – O – W – A

“It’s great to be a Hawkeye!”

Or maybe you are like Pastor Fairow, simply repeating,

“Go Hawks! Go Hawks! Go Hawks!”

And repeating

“Go Hawks! Go Hawks! Go Hawks!”

[Image] Let that image of people coming into a sports event
all pumped up and ready to cheer for their favorite team
serve as the best way to understand Psalm 95.

Just imagine with me...

Imagine that you are on your way to church one Sunday morning
and as you approach the building you can feel a sense of excitement in the air.

The closer you get to the church building
the more clearly you can see the crowds of people
that are gathering for the service that is about to begin.

Then you can hear the sounds from inside the church drifting outside.

Someone inside the church stands up and begins to say to everyone who has gathered that day, ***"O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us kneel before the Lord our maker."***

Then someone else says, ***"The Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods."***

Finally the shouts reach a fever pitch as the whole congregation says together, ***"O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker."***

That is the background for Psalms 95.

It is a psalm that tries to describe what was happening in Israel as people started approaching the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

One person would cry out, ***"O come, let us sing unto the Lord."***

In response to that another person would say, ***"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."***

Then together they would all sing out, ***"O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker."***

In other words, Psalms 95 was a congregational call to worship;
it was one believer telling another believer
that it was now time to celebrate the God we serve
through songs and shouts of praise.

[*Singing*] The psalmist writes (Psalm 95:1):

***"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"***

And we sing.

Historically Lutherans are known as singers.

Garrison Keillor said,

"If you ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Lutheranless place, to sing along on the chorus of 'Michael Row the Boat Ashore', they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Lutherans they'll smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road!"

Garrison even claimed, “*Lutherans are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony.*” You just have to love the exaggeration!

But we do sing.

We sing our liturgy, and we sing a lot of hymns.

A Christmas carol, “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child,” reminds us that we are stewards of the gospel; God’s good news in Jesus is a gift we are called to share:

Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story;

Praise his name in all the earth; hail the King of glory!

During Holy Week, we sing the words of “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” that remind us:

Were the whole realm of nature mine that were a present far too small,

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Another favorite of many people throughout the year reminds us that God’s kingdom is to be our first priority:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God And its righteousness,

And all these things shall be added unto you, Allelu, alleluia.

Still another hymn with stewardship themes begins with these words:

Take My Life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.

“Be Thou My Vision” teaches us to set our priorities straight and to remember our real treasure:

Riches I heed not, not vain, empty, praise;

thou mine inheritance, now and always,

Thou and thou only, first in my heart,

High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

[*Stewardship*] Here we are ... singing our stewardship.

And maybe your thinking ... but pastor, I cannot carry a tune.

I sound like a dog howling at the moon.

I couldn’t carry a tune in a bucket!

Oh we sing, but

the truth of the matter is that we do more than sing.

As followers of Christ we use our talents to serve him.

He set for us the example of servant when he washed the disciples feet.

So we do likewise.... We serve!

We serve by baking cookies, not for Africa, but for those working at church.

We serve by painting walls, either here at the church or the new parsonage.

We serve by leading a meeting at church, but not just at church.

We serve our Lord and Savior by using the talents he has given to us for His glory.

How are you using your talents?

A few years ago our year-long theme was “Take the Next Step.”

Is it time for you to again “Take the Next Step”?

Is there some way you should be serving the church?

Is there some way you should be serving your town?

Have you been holding back? Take the Next Step!

[Review]

Last month, I urged you to be good stewards of you time.

I specifically urged you to use your time to worship God.

This month, I urge you to be good stewards of your talents.

Use your talents for our church, for your life.

You can guess that next month I will urge you to be good stewards
of your treasure.

Time. Talents. Treasure.

As a steward of God’s resources, you need to manage these well.

Are you managing your time, talents, and treasure in a God pleasing manner?

Let that image of people coming into a sports event

all pumped up and ready to cheer for their favorite team

serve as the best way to understand stewardship.

[Conclusion] For not only do you have the role of serving, but also cheering on
those who serve. Let the excitement of stewardship drive you.

S – E – R – V – E

“It’s great to be a servant!”

“Go serve! Go serve! Go serve!” and

“Go serve! Go serve! Go serve!”

Let the excitement help you understand Psalm 95.

Let the excitement help you be good stewards and cheer good stewards....and...

Let the excitement help you share about Jesus Christ.

For he die and rose so that you are forgiven of your sins,

so that you know salvation,

so that you have life everlasting.

You know... we have a lot to cheer about! Amen.

Now let us sing a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!