

A New Song

Psalm 98:1-9
Halifax: 5 October 2003

Introduction:

My friends,

- We have seen hard things in Nova Scotia this week.
 - The powerful, destructive forces of God's holy arm have swept through our city and our province...
 - snapping trees like toothpicks, destroying our property, plunging us into darkness, and even taking lives.
- We call the agent of all this destructive power Hurricane Juan,
 - but as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ,
 - I declare to you today that what we have seen in our land is the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who continue to suppress the truth about God!
 - The truth about God is suppressed...
 - not only by the way deny Him as being the One who provides us with all the blessings in our land,
 - but also by the way we deny His hand as the One who brings destruction and calamity—
 - as the God who brings hurricanes because He is good and we are evil.
- Brothers and sisters,
 - God is not ashamed to claim authorship for all our calamities...
 - In Amos 3:6, His prophet declares:
 - "If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*?"
 - And in Isaiah 45:7, the LORD Himself declares:
 - "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*."
 - With these words, God signs His name to every calamity that comes.
 - He claims responsibility for every one of them—
 - the hurricanes,
 - the floods,

- the famines,
 - the droughts,
 - the wasting diseases,
 - the destructive wars,
 - the random accidents,
 - and all the rest.
- No matter what the calamity may be, God is the author of it...
 - But understand,
 - The Bible **does not** teach that there is always a one to one correspondence—
 - that every calamity is sent in response to some particular sin though that is often the case...
 - that if Joe has cancer, it surely means that there is some sin in Joe's life that God is visiting...
 - But the Bible **does** teach that the fountain of all calamities is sin—
 - And that if there were no sin in the world, there would be no troubles in the world.
- God sends the calamities to reveal His wrath against ungodliness in general.
 - Always, they ought to humble us.
 - Always, they ought to remind us how displeased God is with the sin and rebellion of the human race.
 - Always, they ought to wake us up to our wretchedness and cause us to long for deliverance! for salvation! for redemption! for a new creation!

Brothers and sisters, do you see...

- We need these calamities!
- We would go on, fully content with our sin if God did not send affliction...
 - The affliction has a way of rousing us to see that something is wrong!
 - It is like the pain you feel when you touch a hot stove!
 - The pain is there to tell you that you are in the process of burning your skin off!
 - It's there to alert you that there is a problem that needs to be corrected!
- You can see how God often sends troubles to prepare His elect for redemption...
 - Did He not send Israel to Egypt for 400 years and make them slaves of an oppressive tyrant?

- Why did He do it?
 - Because He knew that if He came to them in prosperity and called them to repentance, they would not see their need for repentance.
 - By coming them in their troubles, they were able to see more clearly their need of Him and to admit it.
- It is often when your life is falling apart that you cry out for help...
 - And in seeking His help, you learn that the real problem is your sin!
 - The pain of this world is there to alert you to the problem of sin so that you will repent and turn to Jesus Christ for salvation.

But what does all this have to do with Psalm 98?

- It has much to do with Psalm 98!

I. Psalm 98 calls you to sing to the LORD a new song!

- A. A new song is a song that people sing when they are brought out of a bad situation into a good situation.
 1. When that happens, it is always the Lord who makes the change.
 - a. But whether you acknowledge Him or not,
 - you sing a new song when He brings about a good change for you.
 - b. Most of the people in our city were out of power this week because of the hurricane...
 - And I bet most of them sang a new song when their power finally came back on!
 - I know I did, and I bet you did too!
 - I don't mean that you gathered your family together and literally sang a little song...
 - but I mean that your heart sang—
 - cheered with gladness.
 - There was a **new song** because there was a **new situation**.
 2. But of course there are much more excellent things about which to sing a new song!
 - a. For example,

- When a person recovers from what was thought to be a terminal illness, he sings a new song.
 - For that, his rejoicing would be much greater than when his electricity came on again!
 - The principle is,
 - the greater you the trouble (or at least the greater your perception of it is)...
 - the greater the new song when deliverance comes!
- b. When the Bible speaks of a new song,
- it speaks of it for the greatest deliverance of all...
 - our redemption!
- 1) Do you remember what Israel did after they crossed the Red Sea?
 - They sang a new song to God for redeeming them.
 - They had been delivered from the tyranny and oppression of Pharaoh and brought under the glorious reign of Jehovah!
 - They were brought into a new kingdom so they sang a new song!
 - 2) Psalm 40 tells us that the New Song is one that God puts in our mouth when He saves us from our misery and ruin...
 - I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, *And* established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see *it* and fear, And will trust in the LORD.
 - Revelation 14 says that none but that redeemed are able to learn the new song.
 - It can only be sung by those who have experienced the change that God's salvation brings.
 - They have personally participated in the redemption that Jesus brought into the world!
 - 3) Of course, this is the greatest deliverance that can be imagined!
 - To be delivered from sin to righteousness...
 - From condemnation to grace...
 - From eternal death to eternal life...
 - From bondage to Satan to service to Jesus Christ!

- The question is,
 - Do you have this new song in your heart?
 - Oh I hope you do!
 - There is nothing better!

B. Psalm 98 tells us when this wonderful deliverance came!

1. It came when the LORD Himself came to judge the earth!

a. That is how Psalm 98 ends:

- Verse 9 says:
 - “For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.”
 - This could actually be translated,
 - “He is come to judge the earth”
 - The Psalmist takes the standpoint of one who is witnessing His coming.

TRANS> But what does it mean when it says that He comes to judge the earth?

b. Do you remember in the Old Testament how God would send men to judge His people—

- And how the people would be changed when the judge came?
- Gideon was a judge...
 - When God sent to judge His people, there were two great changes:
 1. their idols were torn down and righteousness was restored...
 2. they were delivered from the oppressive rule of the Mideonites.
- You see then that the word “judge” as it is used in the Old Testament has a much broader meaning than it does for us.
 - It is not limited to the judicial aspect of government,
 - but includes all aspects of rule.
 - When God raised up judges in the Old Testament, they did two things by their government:
 - They established righteousness among the people of God...
 - And they delivered God’s people from their enemies.

- c. But there is something very remarkable about what it says here in Psalm 98!
- 1) It doesn't say that the LORD will send a judge to judge the world.
 - It says that **He Himself** will come to judge!
 - It is talking here about Jehovah Himself coming to judge the world!
 - Remember that when our Bibles use all capital letters for the word LORD, it is a translation of the name Jehovah or Yahweh.
 - 2) We who live in the days after the coming of Jesus Christ understand what this means!
 - We know that Jehovah really did come to judge the world.
 - We know that the Son of God Himself took to Himself human flesh and came and lived among us.
 - And why did Jehovah Himself come to judge the world?
- a) We have seen it again and again in our study of Psalms 95-97 and in our study of Matthew's gospel.
- He came into this sinful, perishing world to set up His righteous Kingdom!
 - He came to do what was only done in a provisional, typological way through the prophets and the judges of the Old Testament times.
 - He Himself came to establish righteousness in this corrupt world!
- b) Verse 9 goes on to say that righteousness and equity is what characterises His reign!
- Not only does this mean that He Himself does what is right, though it certainly includes that...
 - But it also means that He actually makes us righteous!
 - He makes ruined sinners righteous by His glorious reign!
 - He brings us back to what is right and secures for us the pardon of our sins...
 - When He is finished with us, we will be live lives of perfect holiness—
 - loving God will all our heart soul mind and strength...
 - and loving our neighbour as ourselves.
- c) This is what the world so desperately needs!
- Our world is ruined because we are not under rule of God.

- This is the root of all our miseries!
- This is what Jesus restores!

TRANS> This takes us right back to the beginning of the Psalm.

II. In the first three verses, we are called to sing a new song to Jehovah because of all that He does for us in salvation!

- Each verse brings out a different aspect of His glorious work of salvation that ought to make you sing!

A. Verse 1 shows you ought to sing because His saving work is a marvellous work!

1. By *marvellous things* is meant things that are extraordinary and even impossible to be done by ordinary means.

a. In Deuteronomy 17:8, this word is used in instructing the judges.

- It says, “If a matter arises that is *too hard* or *too marvellous* for you to judge...”
- A marvellous work is one that is *too hard* for man to perform.
- But in numerous places we are told that “nothing is *too hard* or *too marvellous* for Jehovah.”
- Over and over throughout the Psalms, we are exhorted to praise Him for His *marvellous works*, or *wonderful works*...
- things that are too hard for us, but that He has accomplished.

b. And the *marvellous things* that are in view in Psalm 98 have to do with saving His people.

- The rest of verse 1 says, “His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.”
- The phrase *gained him the victory* may be translated:
 - *wrought salvation for Him,*
 - *or accomplished deliverance for Him.*
- In the original, the same root word “Yaw-shah” which means “to save” is used in all three verses.
 - *Salvation* is the marvellous work that Jesus came down from heaven to perform.
 - In fact, His very name, *Yeshuya*, which we pronounce “Jesus” means “Yah-weh saves”—the Yah for Yah-weh is at the end of the word—
 - “Yeshu ya”

- The angel told Joseph to name Him *Jesus*, because He would save His people from their sins.

TRANS> So you see that it is this work of salvation that is said to be a marvellous work!

2. And because it is marvellous...

- It is a work to which you can contribute nothing.
- a. To emphasise that, verse one says:
 - “*His right hand and His Holy arm* have gained Him the victory.”
 - Isaiah helps us to understand that when God does something by His right hand and holy arm, it means that He does it alone—without human aid.
 - 1) See how he speaks of God’s right hand in Isa. 59:15b – 16:
 - “Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, And wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.”
 - 2) Isa. 63:5 likewise:
 - “I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered that there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.”
 - 3) And Isa. 52:10 speaks of His holy arm:
 - “The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.”
 - Holiness as used here has the scope of that which is divine and not human, and therefore able to do what man cannot do.
 - b. And note well that it is Jehovah who is said to have done this alone.
 - That brings us back to what we saw before...
 - This Psalm emphasises that Jehovah Himself is the one who came to earth to save His people from their sins.
 - The One who came to rule us was the very Son of God.
 - c. One of the things that makes this salvation so praise-worthy is the fact that you were so helpless!
 - The price of sin was too high for us to pay because it required eternal death.

- If you were to pay it yourself, it will take you all eternity because you have sinned against the eternal One.
- We then, were totally helpless, totally unable to deliver ourselves, totally dependent on God's mercy alone to save us.
- Only Jehovah Himself, the One who has eternal merit, could pay the penalty of eternal punishment for us so that God's justice could be satisfied.

TRANS> So you are to praise Him because His saving work is a marvellous work.

- Verse 2 gives you a second reason to rejoice before Him

B. You ought to sing a new song to Him because He has openly revealed His saving work before the eyes of all!

- Verse 2 says:

- "The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations."

1. One of the greatest things about the coming of Jesus is that He shows us in such a clear way what God is really like.

a. The fall alienated us from God and brought us into confusion about Him.

- Our foolish minds have been darkened so that we cannot see the glory of God.

b. This is a great loss!

- The only thing that really makes life worth living is the excellent beauty and majesty of God.

- When you really boil everything down, we have no reason to live if we don't know Him!

- Our whole reason for existing is that we might behold His glory and reflect His glory in our own lives...

- We were made in the image of God for that purpose, and everything else we do is sheer vanity.

2. In His saving work, Jesus shows the world the glory of God.

a. The fact that He came at all shows the love of God who was willing to give His only Son to save the world!

b. The fact that He worked miracles among us shows His glorious power over all things—

- When He healed, multiplied the loaves, and calmed the storms he showed His power over creation...
 - When He raised the dead and was raised Himself, He showed His power over life and death.
- c. In His teaching, He revealed to us the glorious wisdom and righteousness of God.
- On the one hand exposing our sin and showing us how we ought to live...
 - On the other hand showing us the mercy of God in salvation.
- d. The fact that He went to the cross to atone for our sins shows the holiness and justice of God—
- That He is such a holy and just God that He must deal with sin severely in order to be true to Himself.
 - It shows that His holy justice demands nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite worth to secure the pardon of our sins.
 - The cross was the only way that God could be just and yet justify sinners.
3. And He has ordered that the righteousness He brought to us should be proclaimed all over the world.
- a. He has given us the privilege to declare His glorious gospel all over the world.
- b. How earnest are you about making the gospel known in the world?
- Let us busy ourselves with spreading the good news of righteousness by faith!
 - Aren't you glad that He brought this glorious gospel to you?
 - Does this make you sing a new song?
- C. And in verse 3, we are called to sing a new song because His salvation is applied—
- first to Israel,
 - then spreading to the ends of the earth, just as he promised!
1. Our condition was such that even though Jesus should come and do all that was required to atone for sin,
- And even though He were to reveal that saving work in all the world...
 - There is not a one of us that would enter His righteous kingdom.
 - We are so twisted and perverted by the fall that we don't even want to be made righteous.
 - We would prefer to go on in our empty, wicked, corrupt way.

2. But verse 3 says that Jesus remembered His mercy to the house of Israel.
 - a. The word mercy speaks of His covenant love—
 - And in that covenant, He did not simply promise to provide a way for Israel's salvation....
 - He promised that He would be a God to them and that He would make them His people.
 - In other words,
 - He promised that some of them would be saved!
 - He promised that at least some of them would be made righteous!
 - b. When Paul speaks about this promise in Romans, He points out that God saved a remnant according to the election of grace.
 - What he means is that even though all their hearts were hard,
 - God forced His way into their lives.
 - This is in fulfilment of the promise that He would save a remnant—
 - in fulfilment of the promise that He would circumcise their hearts...
 - in fulfilment of the promise that He would give them His Spirit to take away their stony hearts and give them a heart of flesh.
 - it is what Jesus called the new birth without which no man would see the kingdom of God.
 - Jesus gives the Spirit in this way because He remembers the promise that He made beforehand to the fathers.
 - That promise was not only for the forgiveness of sin,
 - but also for the Spirit who would baptise us into Christ's kingdom.
3. And not only has He done this for the elect from Israel,
 - a. He has also done it for the elect Gentiles—
 - As Psalm 98 puts it,
 - “The ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”
 - b. When it says that they have **seen** His salvation,
 - it does not simply mean that they have seen others being saved...
 - It means that they have experienced it for themselves.

- The expression is used in the same way I used it at the beginning of this sermon when I said:
 - “We have **seen** hard things in Nova Scotia this week.”
- Jesus has given the Spirit to the Gentiles that they might be saved—
 - He has brought them into His kingdom of righteousness and made them heirs of eternal life with Abraham,
 - just as He promised.

TRANS> And so you see that we have good reason to sing a new song to King Jesus.

- He has accomplished our salvation, a feat which no other could have done...
- He has revealed His saving work in all the world...
- And He has actually applied His saving work to both Jew and Gentile in remembrance of His gracious promise.

So let us sing to Him a new song—

- But how are we to go about singing this new song?

III. Psalm 98 tells you how to sing the new song.

A. In verse 4-8, it presents the new song under the imagery of a coronation service.

1. Listen to what happened at Solomon’s coronation and compare it to what you see in verses 4-8:
 - “Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, ‘Long live king Solomon.’ And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.” (1 Kings 1:39-40)
2. When a king is set on the throne, there is a new song because there is, in a sense, a new kingdom.
 - a. This is especially the case when the old kingdom was a corrupt and miserable kingdom that is now being replaced by a righteous and blessed kingdom.
 - At the coming of the new king to reign, there is new hope and new joy...
 - This calls for a new song!
 - b. This was certainly the case when Joash was crowned.
 - His wicked step grandmother, Athaliah, had attempted to kill all the heirs to the throne after her son the king was killed.
 - Thinking she had killed them all, she took her place as Queen.

- But Joash had been hidden from her by Jehoiada the Priest until the time was right for him to be presented as king.
 - The crowning of Joash was a time for a new song!
 - His crowning meant an end to the tyrannical reign of Queen Athaliah, and called forth great rejoicing in the land...
 - 2 Kings 11:12-14: And he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and *gave him* the Testimony; they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!" Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the escorts *and* the people, she came to the people *in* the temple of the LORD. When she looked, there was the king standing by a pillar according to custom; and the leaders and the trumpeters were by the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets.
 - There was a new song because there was a new king.

3. Now that the very Son of God Himself has come to be our King,

- there ought to be the kind of joy and rejoicing that characterised the crowning of Solomon and Joash.
- Jesus has come to establish a kingdom of righteousness,
 - and if you want to be saved, you must receive Him as your king...
 - You must rejoice in His appearing for salvation and gladly acclaim Him as your King.

B. But what are we taught about our worship under all this imagery of a coronation service?

1. First of all, we are not taught that we are supposed to worship God with literal trumpets and harps and clapping.
 - a. Instruments in the worship of God were restricted to the Levites because they were part of the Old Testament ritual.
 - When David brought up the ark the first time and God's wrath broke out against him,
 - It was because the proper order was not observed.
 - Several things were done in a wrong manner—
 - but one of those things was that **all** the people were playing instruments.
 - When the proper order was followed the second time, it was only the Levites who played the instruments.

- b. These instruments, along with incense, animal sacrifices, altars, basins for ceremonial washings, special clothing, and temples were all part of the worship of God's people in their childhood—that is, before Jesus came.
 - Now that Jesus has come, we are no longer in need of these pedagogical aides.
 - It was the consensus the church fathers for the first millennium that musical instruments pertained to the temple worship, not to Christian worship.
 - In the New Testament, we are called to worship God in Spirit and in truth, not with trumpets and altars...
 - But that does not mean that the trumpets and the incense and the harps and the altars and the animal sacrifices have no meaning for us today...
 - They have much meaning...
 - One of our favourite names for Jesus is “the lamb of God.”
 - By this name, He is connected to all the Old Testament sacrifices so that these sacrifices are given more meaning for us than they had for Israel...
 - even though we are no longer to offer them!

TRANS> But what do the trumpet and the harp and the things in Psalm 98 tell us about our worship?

- 2. The trumpet and the shouting, I believe, refer to proclamation as a part of our worship.
 - a. In the coronation service, the trumpets and the shouting were used to announce that the king had been crowned!
 - They were also used to call Israel to worship, and were blown when the sacrifices were offered.
 - It represented a going forth of the call of God.
 - b. Our worship is to include the proclamation of King Jesus.
 - He has commanded that the gospel should be preached in all the world.
 - We are to declare to everyone that His righteous Kingdom has come,
 - That His sacrifice for our sins on the cross has been accepted...
 - And that He is now raised from death and is ascended to the right hand of God to reign until He has brought all His enemies under His feet!

TRANS> The trumpet, then speaks of proclamation.

3. The harp speaks of the melodic, joyful response of God's people to the proclamation of His kingdom.
 - a. Worship is dialogical in nature...
 - That means that God speaks and we respond.
 - Worship is a two way interaction between God and His people—
 - The trumpet of proclamation sounds...
 - Then we sound our response with the harp and singing.
 - b. In our worship services we try to reflect this dialogical nature of worship.
 - 1) We begin with a call to worship in which we recognise that God is the one who summons us to assemble for worship.
 - We respond to His call by giving thanks to Him for calling us, asking Him to forgive our sins as we come before Him, and asking Him to bless us as we meet with Him.
 - Then we adore His name in a song of praise.
 - 2) After this, the trumpet sounds again in the proclamation of His word as it is read to us and preached to us.
 - The harp responds with a prayer of response and a song of response to His word.
 - Then we confess that we believe what He has said with a creed or a confession.
 - 3) After this is the Lord's Supper which itself is dialogical...
 - The trumpet proclaims Christ as crucified to give us life and calls us to feed upon Him...
 - And we respond by eating the bread and drinking the cup, and then by giving thanks in prayer and song.
 - 4) The service is ended by our prayers for His blessing, which is a response to the entire service...
 - Then at the very end is the benediction in which He places His name on us and sends us away with His blessing.

TRANS> Worship that does not have both the trumpet and the harp is worship that is incomplete.

- God speaks life to us and we respond by making melody to Him.
 - This is the new song!

c. But this pattern of public worship is not just for public worship!

- 1) The dialogue with God is to continue in our daily lives...

- Everything you do is to be in response to His gracious call.
- Whether you are washing dishes, working in an office, or leading family worship...
 - Your life is to be a glorious melody of to the LORD in response to His grace.

2) Your whole life is to be a new song.

- You know, a lot of people get all worked up trying to figure out if Ephesians 4:19 where it tells us to...
 - speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—
 - is about public worship or private worship.
- I believe the answer is “yes!”
 - It’s about public worship that is to be carried over into private living...
 - All of life is to be about singing and making melody in your heart to Lord and about giving thanks to His name in all things...
 - but all this is to spring out of public worship.
 - Your whole life is to be a joyful noise to the Lord.

C. And my friends, Psalm 98 yearns that this new song—this joyful noise to the Lord—would be universal!

1. Verse 7 & 8 call for seas and the rivers and the hills to join in the praise!

- The point is that no one should be silent!
 - King Jesus has done such marvellous things that the whole world ought to be praising Him!
- He has come to establish a righteous kingdom in a sinful world!
 - He has come to restore what is right in a world where everything is wrong!
 - That calls for universal praise!
 - Let the world arise to sing a new song, to raise a joyful shout to our God!

2. But woe to you if you cannot rejoice in this righteous kingdom!

- Woe to you if you can hear that Jehovah Himself has come to rule the earth and to restore righteousness and remain unmoved!

- If you have no interest in the One who comes to this world of hurricanes and corruption to bring us salvation...
 - You are surely blind and dead!

- May you soon hear the voice of the Son of God and wake up before it is too late.
 - May a new song be heard from your life soon.
 - May you see how stinking a place this fallen world is and how sweet a place Christ's kingdom is!
 - That will make you sing a new song.