

Haslett Community Church-United Church of Christ
Third Sunday after Pentecost- June 1, 2008

Scripture lessons: Psalm 147:1-7 & Colossians 3:16-17

HOW CAN WE KEEP FROM SINGING?

In the life of the Christian Church, in the life of this church, the Haslett Community Church-United Church of Christ, how can we keep from singing?

Well, we can't because we're human. We're human beings with bodies that have voices to make sounds and souls that have passions which must be expressed. People everywhere and always with voices to make sounds and passions to be expressed, can't help but sing.

As Christians, we can't keep from singing because we're a people together. Bring people together and inevitably they'll sing. Even those of us who are sometimes reluctant to sing because someone has cruelly told us that we have bad voices or has convinced us that singing's shameful or embarrassing because it's somehow too expressive or unmanly, even we will sing if we're in a group that's ready to belt out "Happy Birthday to You" or "Take Me Out to the Ballgame". People together sing.

It's a happy mode of cooperation, a natural linking together in a common activity and purpose that brings simple pleasure both to those who do it and those who see it done. The legendary Beatle, Sir Paul McCartney, has said, "I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity (of it)- to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating (in song)."

In the church, we so often have both of these pleasures- the pleasure of singing together and the pleasure of seeing and hearing choirs sing. Today's the last Sunday our Adult Choir is with us before their annual summer break begins, but we'll have extra pleasure in seeing and hearing them this morning as *they* will present the sermon. They'll sing it through anthems chosen as among the very favorites that they've sung since last September.

In their singing, they will, as they always do, remind us of the biggest, best, and truest reason we have for singing- namely, the great God of us all who's been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. They'll sing of the Holy One who brings us to that river in Judea, who has come to us in the Star from Jacob, who in that Star has conquered death on Easter morning, who will fill us to overflowing with grace and mercy when at last we are empty of us.

They'll remind us once more that,
"No storm can shake our inmost calm
While to this Rock we're clinging.
Since Love commands all heaven and earth,
How can we keep from singing?"

(from the hymn, we'd sung earlier, "My Life Flows on in Endless Song", #476 in NCH)

The choir then sang:
"River in Judea", Feldman/Leavitt

Oftentimes I dream of music, of the river that freely flows. And it sings a song sweeter than honey, one ev'rybody knows. Late at night I hear it singing then again when I wake at dawn. And it fills me up with hope and goodwill, the will to go on.

Refrain: There is a river in Judea that I heard of long ago. And it's a singing, ringing river that my soul cries out to know.

I believe it keeps on trav'lin but it rests on the Sabbath day. And the time when it pauses in stillness, I almost hear it pray. When I'm weary and downhearted, how I long for the song it sings, for the calm within its gentle blue, the peace that it brings. Refrain

May the time not be too distant when we meet by the river shore. 'Til then dream of that wonderful day as we sing once more. Refrain

“There Shall a Star from Jacob”, Mendelssohn

There shall a star from Jacob come forth and a scepter from Israel rise up and dash in pieces princes and nations. As bright the star of morning gleams, so Jesus sheddeth glorious beams of light and consolation! Thy Word, O Lord, radiance darting, truth imparting gives salvation; Thine be adoration.

“Empty of Me”, Lantz

I hunger in the morning for a taste of grace, I thirst for Your Spirit full and free. You promised You would fill me with Your power divine, but first I must be empty of me. There is room in my vessel for the world and its gold. I gather and embrace the things I see. But for Your Holy Spirit not a corner remains; I know I must be empty of me. Fill me up, Lord, I want to overflow, fill me up with Your Spirit full and free. Turn me upside down, pour me out on the ground, then fill me up and keep me empty of me. So make my heart Your vessel, Lord, my soul Your very own, full of You in what I long to be. A life that's overflowing with Your mercy and grace. Fill me up and keep me empty of me.

“Now the Green Blade Riseth”, arr. Courtney

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain, wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain; Love lives again, that with the dead has been: Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green. In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain, thinking that He never would awake again. Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen: Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green. Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain, Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain; quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen: Love is come again like wheat that springeth green. When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain, Jesus' touch can call us back to life again. Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been: Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.