Singing Back to God
Psalm 96

Hans Selye did studies on the impact of stress on the human body. He concluded that gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. You think about any negative emotion you face, any toxic emotion that you're dealing with, and gratitude—thanksgiving overcomes it and overwhelms it! You want to be happy? Then be grateful.

There are at least a dozen different ways that God tells us to express our gratitude. These must be God's favorite expressions of gratitude. The second habit of expressing gratitude is singing back to God. Our God is a singing God. The Bible tells us that God sings. The amazing fact is, He sings about us. He sings love songs and joyful songs about us.

Zephaniah 3:17 says, "*The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing*."

You've never heard God sing over you, but one day in heaven you're going to hear God sing about you, and it's going to be the most beautiful, joyful sound you've ever heard. I can't wait to hear pure, perfect joy. We have joy on this planet, but it's a broken joy, an imperfect joy. When God sings, it is pure, perfect joy. You're going to get to hear God singing over you one day. That's something to look forward to!

Have you ever listened to a mother calm her baby by quietly singing to the baby? I could never forget the sacred moments of listening to my wife, Lynne, sing to our children with lullabies. I can hear her soft voice, humming and singing to our children.

That's how God loves you. God sings. The only reason music exists in the universe is because God invented it. God is a musical God, and since you were created in His image, you like music too. There are many verses of scripture where God tells us to express our gratitude to Him through singing. The Psalms represent the songbook of the Bible. They are great poems and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God, praising God for who He is, giving thanks for what He has done.

"*Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp*." Psalm 147:7

"*Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song*." Psalm 95:2

When Jesus observed that last Passover with His disciples, which became the Lord's Supper, it was at the end as He was setting His face towards Gethsemane where He would surrender to the will of the Father, pour out His blood on the cross to die for the sins of all mankind. Scripture says in the Gospel of Matthew that when they had completed the supper, they sang a hymn and went out into the night, out into the Garden. Can you imagine that? Our Savior singing on the way to the cross. God the Father sings, God the Son sings, God the Holy Spirit sings. You may ask, "How does the spirit sing?" He sings through His people, He sings to His church. We are the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit. One of the evidences of a Spirit-filled life and a Spirit-filled church is singing.

This is one of the main reasons for coming to worship together instead of just watching a service online. You miss the value of singing praise together. You sing better when you sing with others. I don't like to hear myself sing, but I don't mind singing when there's 500 or 1,000 other people out there.

Colossians 3:16 says this, "*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts*."

This is the first habit of thanksgiving that God loves, singing back to God. Some people might say, "I don't to sing." Some may even say, "I can't sing." Some people say, "I've lost my voice." God loves your voice. He gave it to you. He gave you your voice. He wants to hear your voice from you, not somebody else's, not you trying to be somebody else. He wants to hear your voice because He gave it to you. You don't have to be embarrassed about singing with your voice. You need to learn to accept yourself the way God does. You need to treat yourself the way God does. God enjoys hearing you sing praise to Him. God wants you to learn to sing to Him all the time.

Psalm 44:8 says, "*In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever*." Not just in service and worship on the weekends. All day long we sing praise to God. We are always grateful to Him. Some of us hum more than we sing. We hum our thanksgiving song. That's okay too.

Psalm 63:6 says, "*On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the nigh*t."

Psalm 22:3 tells us that, "*You are holy, you inhabit the praises of your people*." What was true for Israel in that day is true for His people today. God dwells in the praises of His people. Praise is God's address.

Psalm 34:1-2 says, "*Oh magnify the Lord with me. Come, let us exalt His name together. I will bless the Lord at all times.* His praise will continually be in my mouth."

It's not something we do some of the time. I want to be the kind of Christian that is praising God all the time. I want the beauty of His holiness and the blessing of His presence upon my lips and upon my life. We know that God is everywhere. He is omnipresent. There's no place you can go from the presence of the Lord. But there is a special sense, a supernatural sense that when we offer praise to Him, His manifest presence is experienced. We dwell in His presence when we offer praise to Him. Did you know there are more commandments in the Scripture to praise the Lord than even to pray? Now we know we are to pray. We're commanded to pray, but more often in the Scripture we are told to praise the Lord. Even the model prayer that Jesus taught us in praying begins with "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name." That's praise. And it closes with "For Yours is the kingdom and the glory forever." That's praise. So praise is not just a part of our lives, but it is to be the essential part of all our life.

Bible verses command us to praise God daily.

Psalm 81:1 says, "*Sing aloud to God our strength. Shout for joy to the God of Jacob.*"

Psalm 95:1-2 says, "Oh come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving, let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise."

Psalm 135:3 says, "*Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good. Sing to His name for it is pleasant.*"

Psalm 100:1-2 says, "*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into His presence with singing.*"

Psalm 40:3 says, "*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see it and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.*"

"*Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns.' The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness*." Psalm 96:1-13

This has been called our song of our salvation. We are to exalt our God and His name and for His fame among all the nations of the earth. It's a Second Coming psalm, in that as it closes it speaks of the day when God Himself shall reign. Jesus is coming again, and when He comes, we'll gather around the throne of God and celebrate our Savior forever with new songs of praise and adoration to God!

There are other ways that we worship God, but singing is certainly a beautiful, powerful, and an essential way in which we are to honor God. He reigns forever!

- Gratitude Matters in Tough Seasons.

How often have we been comforted by our God singing over us and by singing to our God in times of darkness? The Bible says, "*He gives songs in the night*." Job 35:10.

Psalm 42:8 says, *"By day the Lord directs his love, by night his song is with me..."*

Psalm 77:6 says, *"Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart."*

I can tell you in some of the darkest days of my life He has given those songs in the night. He heals our hurts. He gives the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Praise and worship strengthens our souls, fortifies our faith, and defeats the devil. Satan is allergic to praise. He cannot stay where the name of God and the presence of God lives. So at the name of Jesus Satan flees, running from the room. The last verses here speak of the multitudes worshipping Jesus with loud anthems of praise. It speaks of all nations and all of nature, from the trees to the mountains.

Paul and Silas did not end up in the inner Philippian prison because they did wrong—they were there because they obeyed God and cast a spirit out of a slave girl. Stripped, beaten, and locked in stocks in the darkest, coldest part of the dungeon, their situation looked hopeless. By all human logic, this was a time for despair, bitterness, or silent misery. Midnight represents the darkest, quietest hour before the dawn—a symbol of the moments in our own lives when trials feel heaviest and relief feels furthest away. They didn't whisper angry questions; they sang and prayed out loud.

"...*and the other prisoners were listening to them***".** People in the dark are always listening to how we handle our own dark moments. Your perseverance under pressure can be a silent witness to others.

"*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose*." Acts 16:25-26

God didn't prevent them from going to prison, and He didn't stop the beatings beforehand. Instead, He met them right in the middle of their midnight. When human strength ran out, God's power stepped in with a shaking that broke every bond.
Jesus said, "If you don't praise Me, even the rocks will cry out." And so the trees clap their hands and the leaves lift themselves in worship of God and the mountains and the roaring seas and the all nations will one day praise Him when Christ comes. You know what this song is saying? The King is coming, and He will redeem and will rule. He will give retribution, and righteousness will rule. There is pain and recklessness and lawlessness is in our streets. You see the pain in people's faces. We pray that we could end that in some way, but it's not a political solution. It's not a socialized, sociological solution. It's a spiritual solution, and it really won't be solved until that day when Christ returns and makes everything right. Then there will be peace, then there will be no rioting in the streets of glory. There will be no death and dying in heaven. When Christ reigns, the King Jesus is coming. Give Him glory, give Him praise until that day when we see Him face to face and praise Him forever!

- Gratitude Pleases God And Brings His Blessing.

Gratitude is the sacrifice that God loves most, the sacrifice of praise. Now what has always baffled me about Thanksgiving Day is how very little actual time is given to thanksgiving of God. We spend a full day preparing the meal. We spend several hours watching a parade or football, and talking. Maybe one or two minutes thanking God in prayer, because you don't want the food to get cold with a long prayer. So even though it's Thanksgiving Day, it's what we do the least of on that day.

Maybe you say, "I don't know what to be thankful for." In week 4 of the series we are going to give you handout with a list of verses. I want to encourage you to sit at the table together, ask everybody around your table to read one of the verses. Then after all the verses have been read, you might start a discussion, simply asking, "Which of these verses are you the most thankful for?" "What does God want us to be grateful for?" Not just at Thanksgiving but all the time.

- Gratitude Is The Evidence Of Spiritual Maturity.

You want to know if you're spiritually mature? How grateful are you? How much do you live with the attitude of gratitude?

- Stop Watching And Start Worshipping.

"*Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, always overflowing with, thanksgiving*." Colossians 2:7

The more mature you are, the more grateful you'll be. God hears your song, whether it's the song of a sparrow or the song of a nightingale. Don't just come to church and stand there with your hands in your pockets when God has done so much for us and God has blessed us in so many ways! How could we help but say it? How can we not sing it? And it's a sacrifice. I know there are times I don't feel like singing. When I sing and I celebrate the goodness of God and the grace of God, my spirit goes from here to way up here! When we lift Him, we get lifted up. It happens every time! Bring it! Bring your praise with you. Before you even get here, let your praise in church and your worship be an overflow of your heart.

Reason To Sing For Joy:

1. Because God Gave Us Life.

Psalm 139:13-14 says, "*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*"

Take time to tell God, "Thank You because You made me." We wouldn't even be here if it weren't for Him, and that alone is reason enough to sing. Tell God, "I thank you because you made me. I wouldn't even be alive, if it weren't for You." That's reason enough.

2. Because We're Still Alive!

Are you glad you are still alive today? Every single day we are given on this earth is a gift meant to be enjoyed and celebrated in His presence.

Ecclesiastes 11:8 says, "*However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all*."

3. Because He Saved Us.

Psalm 13:5 says, "*I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation*."

Our ultimate joy isn't tied to our changing earthly circumstances, but to the permanent, unchanging reality of our rescue through Christ.

4. Because God Is Good.

"*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good*." Psalm 118:1

We don't just praise God for what He does. We praise Him for who He fundamentally is. He is inherently, completely good.

5. Because God Answers Our Prayers.

"*I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation*." Psalm 118:21

Every answered prayer is a direct monument to God's attentiveness, proving that He hears us when we call out to Him.

6. Because God Guides Our Life.

"I will praise the Lord, who guides me; even at night instructs me." Psalm 16:7

I can be grateful that He shows me how to live. We can sing with massive relief because we don't have to figure out this life on our own. He promises to show us exactly how to live.

7. Because God Loves Us.

"*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.*" Psalm 107:8

Human love can waver, fade, or fail, but we can sing for joy knowing that God will absolutely never stop loving us. We can be grateful that He will never stop loving us.

8. Because God Forgives Our Sin.

"*Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins*." Psalm 103:2

The heavy weight of our past, our mistakes, and our guilt has been completely lifted and wiped clean by His grace.

9. Because God Gives Us Strength when We are Weak.

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." Psalm 28:7

When our natural energy and resolve run completely dry, God wraps us in His supernatural strength. We can sing for joy because, when we are weak, He proves Himself strong in us.

10. Because God is Preparing an Eternal Home for Us

"And they sang a new song before the throne… shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!'" Revelation 14:3, 19:6-7
This broken world is not our final destination. We can lift our voices today because we know we will spend eternity singing songs of victory in a heavenly home where there is no more pain, sorrow, or death.