

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14  
Christmas Day – Year B – December 25, 2017

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*Joy to the World, the Lord has Come!* This is one of the old familiar carols. Singing is praying twice according to St. Augustine. There's an old hymn called *How Can I Keep from Singing?* It's not a Christmas hymn necessarily and yet it's refrain is powerful at Christmas time and in all time. The verses are as follows:

My life flows on in endless song;  
above earth's lamentation,  
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn  
that hails a new creation.

Though all the tumult and the strife,  
I hear that music ringing.  
It finds an echo in my soul.  
How can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die?  
The Lord my Savior liveth.  
What though the darkness gather round?  
Songs in the night he giveth.

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
a fountain ever springing!  
All things are mine since I am his!  
How can I keep from singing?

*Refrain*

No storm can shake my inmost calm  
while to that Rock I'm clinging.  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,  
how can I keep from singing?

We sing a lot during Christmas. We have the gifts of hymn writers that have given us blessings of words and music that express what hearts are bursting with. The stores have been playing Christmas carols for quite sometime—perhaps earlier than we needed. Our season of Advent liturgically slows us down a little—we still sing and yet we're not singing the carols in church. Some traditions do. In our tradition we sing the songs of anticipation and longing for Jesus to come among us.

Jesus' birth ushers in a new time—a new time over and over in our hearts. “The Word became flesh and lived among us.” John's gospel reminds us of the incredible gift God bestowed long ago and continues to bestow now and throughout eternity.

The psalmist has done what songwriters do best by giving power to words. O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. God has done such a marvelous thing in coming among us in human form—in the person of Jesus. Let all the earth make a joyful noise—break forth into joyous song and praises! With all kinds of instruments and melodies, make a joyful noise. Not only are humans to make a joyful noise—all of creation is to make a joyful noise.

Let the sea roar—the world and those who live in it—the floods clap their hands—the hills sing together. Let all creation sing with joy in Jesus' coming among us. The psalmist reminds us that the Lord will come to judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. Tables will be turned right side up. Bridges between peoples will be built. The lost will be found. The broken will be healed. The hungry will be fed. The nations will be rebuilt. Peace will come. Justice and hope will abound.

It's a day that calls the question: How can I keep from singing? It doesn't matter how beautiful the voice. We're invited on this Christmas morning to make a joyful noise in the thanksgiving to God for the greatest gift we could ever have—the gift of love in Jesus Christ that changes the world, one person at a time. Ellen Davis is an Old Testament professor and scholar and says about Psalm 98. Psalm 98 comes to us “not as a matter for local or private celebration by the righteous and, correspondingly, dread for the wicked, but rather as the occasion of cosmic jubilation.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us join the voices of all creation, rejoicing in God's gift of Jesus this day and every day. How can we keep from singing, knowing the preciousness of that gift?

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen F. Davis, “Psalm 98: Rejoicing in Judgment,” *Interpretation* 46, no. 2, April 1992, 171.