

Greetings Redeemer family,

Our Call to Worship text this week may surprise you a little. It surprised me.

Each week, we begin our service with a reading from Scripture that reminds us of the character of God and our duty to praise Him. I love to select texts that remind us of the many ways that God has proved His faithfulness in granting victories, answering prayer. But life doesn't always feel like a succession of victory after victory. Sometimes it seems that the only answer to our prayers is the holy silence of God. Still, even here, we are not alone. This road has been walked before by our forefathers in the faith. They remind us that it is possible to hope when the way is hard.

This psalm is not a victory song. It's a song of longing. You could even say its a prayer of complaint. The writer is in the midst of suffering and cries to God for deliverance – a deliverance that has not yet come. The psalmist's example here is amazing. First, he is very honest with God about his desperation. He expresses his sorrow and torment in stark words. But he doesn't stop there, and this is the surprising thing. He reminds himself of the promises of God, and of God's past faithfulness. The Lord's love is unfailing, and His salvation is the psalmists great delight. God's character is unchanging, and His Word is secure. This is how the psalm concludes: even in the midst of hardship, the psalmist can sing for joy, because the Lord is good.

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
for he has been good to me.*

We begin our service this week following the example of the psalmist by singing of the goodness of our God. The first song, “Step by Step”, is a simple song of commitment to the God who has called us His own. The second, “God of Wonders”, similarly reminds us to praise God in the midst of every circumstance of life. The third is a classic hymn meditating on the surpassing glory of the most high God.

*O God, You are my God and I will ever praise You
O God, You are my God and I will ever praise You
I will seek You in the morning, and I will learn to walk in Your ways
And step by step You'll lead me, and I will follow You all of my days*

*Early in the morning, I will celebrate the light
When I stumble in the darkness, I will call Your name by night
God of Wonders beyond our galaxy
You are Holy, holy*

*The universe displays your majesty
You are Holy, holy
Hallelujah to the Lord of Heaven and Earth*

*Holy Holy Holy, though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful men, Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity*

Our confession of faith this week is taken from the document *Our World Belongs to God*, which comes from the Christian Reformed Church. Like the psalm that began our service, this statement of faith is a beautiful reminder of the goodness of God in the midst of a broken world.

*As followers of Jesus Christ, we declare with joy and trust: Our world belongs to God!
Our world, fallen into sin, has lost its first goodness,
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands: God holds this world with fierce love.
Keeping his promise, he sends Jesus into the world,
pours out the Holy Spirit, and announces the good news:
sinners who repent and believe in Jesus live anew as members of the family of God—
the firstfruits of a new creation.
We rejoice in the goodness of God, renounce the works of darkness,
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.
As covenant partners, set free for joyful obedience,
we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in the world.
With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended, we expect the Day of the Lord.
We are confident that the light which shines in the present darkness
will fill the earth when Christ appears.
Come, Lord Jesus. Our world belongs to you.*

Following a time of confession and assurance of pardon, we will sing a song that is new to our services, although many of you may already know it. To help you learn it, I've included a link to a YouTube video below. This is a wonderful setting of the eternal song of the angels, who surround the throne of God, continually singing:

*Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty
Who was and is and is to come
With all creation I sing praise to the King of Kings
You are my everything and I will adore You*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bL0nDrEYDnk>

We close our service this week with a song calling us to leave behind the the lesser things of this world and be enthralled with the surpassing glory and goodness of God. I know I find this song terribly convicting, as I think of the many ways that I find to piddle away time with modern distractions like e-mail, television, and the like – rather than soaking in the eternal Word of God and committing my talents to the growth of His Kingdom reign. My prayer for each of us this week is that we would remember that we have been redeemed “in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph 2:10) Let us invest our energies in things that matter.

*Come raise your thankful voice,
Ye souls redeemed with blood;
Leave earth and all its toys
and mix no more with mud.*

*Dearly we're bought, highly esteemed
Redeemed with Jesus' blood, redeemed
Dearly we're bought, highly esteemed
Redeemed with Jesus' blood, redeemed*

*With heart, and soul and mind,
Exalt redeeming love;
Leave worldly cares behind,
And set your minds above.*

*Lift up your ravished eyes,
And view the glory given;
All lower things despised,
Ye citizens of heaven.*

*Be to this world as dead,
Alive to that to come;
Our life in Christ is hid,
Who soon shall call us home.*

Come quickly, good Lord Jesus,

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