

## LORD, SING THROUGH ME

As we worship through hymns today, we are reminded that in Scripture, the Psalms – in the middle of the Bible - are considered the hymnal, sometimes referred to as the Psalter. If we read this book from beginning to end, we find that in talking to God and about God, the psalms cover the whole range of human experience and emotion – from songs of great joy to songs of deep lament. There are hymns of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, wisdom..... many categories.

We cannot count on any one of anything to cover everything. This is true of hymns, each of which gives only a glimpse of our faith and our God who is beyond knowing and beyond containing. Thankfully, we have a range of hymns, like the Psalms. One hymn cannot express it all.

In addition, one hymn cannot satisfy all. We have our preferences. Some prefer the old hymns we first learned as children. Others enjoy hearing and trying to sing a new hymn. Some are attracted simply to the melodies; others pay more attention to the words. Occasionally, both the words and the melody seem to resonate within us, and we may add the hymn to our list of favorites. For many people, the all-time favorite hymn is “Amazing Grace”; for others and for whatever reason, this hymn may not even be on the list. Some have distinct preferences regarding composers. Some prefer only hymns that are upbeat and joyful. Others prefer to follow the full journey of Jesus, as well as the full human experience of God, and include upon occasion more somber and reflective selections.

The challenge, it seems, in recognizing our preferences, is not to allow these to take precedence over why we come for worship and why we sing. We gather to acknowledge together a Presence greater than ourselves - God who is worthy of our highest praise.

When we find ourselves slipping away from this focus, perhaps we can ask God to redirect our attention. In the case of hymns, perhaps we can honor the fact that each hymn is somehow a part of our Christian heritage, offered by a Christian sister or brother somewhere along the way through the ages. We can have our preferences without worshiping our preferences and without allowing them to cover the lens that opens us to God.

Psalm 96 calls us simply to sing to the Lord – and to sing to the Lord a new song – if not a new song, perhaps an old song with new spirit.

There's a song by Jonathan Nelson, - not in our hymnal - entitled, *I Am Your Song*, that offers another dimension of our singing hymns. One of the lines is, "Lord, Sing Through Me." This is also the title of an album of anthems by the choir at Lakeside Baptist Church in Rocky Mount: "Lord, Sing Through Me."

We don't find these exact words in Scripture in this order but we do hear this concept throughout Scripture. It seems to express our basic calling as children of God and followers of Jesus – the call to allow God in whose image we are created to flow into the world through us – on a personal level: that God will love through me – and live through me – and give light to the world through me – and sing through me – that I will be God's song not only in this sanctuary when we gather but in God's sanctuary that is the world.

Today, as we sing praise to God, let us pray that God can be heard, that we can be open for God to sing through each one of us. Amen.