

LUM SUNDAY DEVOTIONAL, OCTOBER 23, 2022

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: PSALM 150, PRAISE FOR GOD'S SURPASSING GREATNESS

- 1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
 praise him in his mighty firmament!
- 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
 praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
- 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
 praise him with lute and harp!
- 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
 praise him with strings and pipe!
- 5 Praise him with clanging cymbals;
 praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- 6 Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!

EXODUS 15:20

Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.

BLESSED THOUGHTS: "STRIKE UP THE BAND!"

Here is a devotional I never dreamt I'd write, but God does not have to hit me over the head with a club to alert me when he's trying to tell me something.

Every year, in Fall, a lot of schools encourage their students to sign up to learn how to play a certain instrument in the School Band. Now when my own kids went to high school, each of them chose to play the trumpet. One was good enough to help play her Grandma Olson's favorite hymns at her funeral, along with her cousins.

Now, this Fall, each of my grandkids is choosing their instrument. Vivian and Ruby chose the drums. It's just been a couple of weeks, but already Ruby can belt out a pretty good beat, and she enjoys doing rim shots after I tell one of my old jokes (should we enter our church's Talent Night?). Then my Grandson pulled one right out of the blue. He wants to play the tuba. I noticed at the Queen's funeral that in the military bands they usually have the biggest guy playing that instrument. By contrast my little second-grader has started piano lessons, and her first assignment was the Star Wars Theme. All of this got me thinking about church music.

Back in my school days, our music teacher played songs on an upright piano that must have originally come over on Noah's Ark. In our Sunday School devotions someone played the piano, but—during church—it was the organ all the way.

When I started serving St. Paul's in Brunkild, we had two organists. Sometimes they played accompaniment on an electronic keyboard. It was a sad time when first one musician retired, and then our faithful organist died of cancer. It was painful to listen to us try to sing a hymn without her awesome organ music. Finally, I bought a very basic laptop and an amplifier and downloaded an app so that I could play both music and singing during our hymns. It was

just one more job for me to find music that matched the songs in our hymn book, and then to figure out how to get my amp and laptop to cooperate so we could actually have the Lord's praise fill the room. I'm saving that hardware for possible use sometime at the Urban, assuming we get back together for in-person worship before I get shipped off to Shady Pines Retirement Home. I found some good Indigenous flute music that might be suitable for holy communion. We'll see.

But did you ever wonder why playing music and *singing* are so much a part of God's worship, from Temple times down to now? First, singing. When we sing we don't just share words, or even ideas: we share emotions. When we're happy, praise music is suitable. In hard times, the old hymns of faith encourage us—together. And, yes, the Holy Spirit helps us sing and draw us together.

Then there's the *instruments*. In the Jerusalem Temple they had singers, musicians—and dancers. The instruments have changed a bit. What the Bible calls a timbrel is pretty much a tambourine. It's similar to the hand-help drums often used by Indigenous musicians while singing an honor song. Lutes and harps sound a lot like guitars and banjos (banjos came from Africa and were originally made out of gourds). Indigenous people know all about *dancing* (I told my granddaughter that her drumbeat was the same as the ones used in many pow-wow dances). If I told a Lutheran Congregation that today we're going to worship God with dancing, someone might want to call 9-1-1, but I have served churches in which dancers dramatically acted out religious themes. One Pentecost, a group of congregations got a permit and actually held a parade through the downtown, with flags and singing and—yes—dancing. It was an unforgettable experience.

Let's end with the *drums!* The drummers at an Indigenous Dance are really the beating heart of the gathered people. No one is a loner. Everyone moves together as one living group. Without the drums and the chanting and the dance, the Spirit would not be able to draw us together to God and to each other nearly as powerfully. This what the Psalm means when it shouts "Praise the Lord!, which, in Hebrew, is one word, "Alleluia!"

May God continue to use music to ignite God's praise in God's House! Amen

PRAYER:

Lord, we can only imagine the praise we'll hear in heaven
Ours must often sound so feeble, here and now.
Many of us sound more like crows than nightingales,
but may your praise never cease, both in our music, and in our deeds. Amen