

Charles St-Onge
June 7, 2006
Pentecost Wed

O Sing Unto the Lord a New Song!

*O Sing unto the Lord a new song!
For he hath done marvelous things
His right hand and his holy arm
Have gotten him the victory*

*The Lord has made known his salvation
His righteousness has he openly showed in the sight of the nations
He has remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel
All the end of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*

Ezekiel was deeply troubled, down to the depth of his very soul. He had seen his people turn from the Lord, their God, and for the disobedience he saw tens of thousands dragged in slavery to this foreign land, to Babylon. He had seen the shekinah, the Glory of the Lord depart from the Temple and leave the Holy Land. Here, Babylon, what was left of the House of Israel hung their harps by the river and mourned the loss of their holy city, the City of Zion.

Yet they refused to admit their own guilt in their destruction. Ezekiel remembered the Word of the Lord spoken by his servant Moses:

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.”
(Deuteronomy 30:15-18)

His people had turned away from the Lord. They had forgotten how to worship and serve him with all their heart. They had not kept his commands. And the Lord had fulfilled his vow, by sending the armies of Nebuchadnezzar upon from Iraq to invade and destroy the city his people had come to love more than himself.

How would the Lord make known his salvation now in the sight of the nations? How would he remember his past mercy to the house of Israel?

Then the Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. The Spirit of the Lord spoke through him, and in the same way he spoke through Jeremiah he spoke these words of comfort:

It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name... I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Ah, sighed Ezekiel. “That is how it will be. The Lord must do this thing, and not us. And he will do it for his own sake, and no ours. Sing for joy, oh people of Israel, sing for joy to the Lord!”

*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord / all the earth
Make a loud noise and re / jice and sing his praise
Sing unto the Lord / with the harp
And the / voice of a psalm*

*With trumpets and sound of / cornet
Make a joyful noise be / fore the Lord the king
Let the sea roar and the full / ness thereof
The world and / they that dwell therein*

As if John had not seen enough, in his vision while on the isle of Patmos, he was granted by the Spirit the greatest sight of all. He saw the new heaven and the new earth, the recreation long predicted by both prophet and apostle. He saw the great and tumultuous sea disappear. He saw the universe reborn, as a Phoenix is reborn from the ashes. And then – oh, too beautiful for words! – he saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, the one promised by Ezekiel and all the prophets. He saw, not men ascending to God, but God at last descending to be with his creation. He saw a bride dressed for her husband, glowing with the splendor of the wedding day.

Then he shook and trembled as he heard a voice from the throne of heaven itself announcing this great news: “The dwelling of God is now with men, and he will live with them.” The great God, the I Am, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty Counselor and Prince of Peace, the Beginning and the Ending, come to live with mortal flesh. At last – no more death, no more disease, no more disasters – the wages of sin paid for and swept away. The Old Order had at last passed away. God himself would make things right. The glory of the Lord – the Lamb of God – would return to live among his people as he had long ago promised. John, feverish and in ecstasy at this vision, at what his suffering and his churches’ sufferings were all about, wrote down these words and passed them on, generation to generation, until at last they have come to us. Praise the Lord!

*Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together be / fore the Lord
For he / comes to judge the earth
With righteousness shall he / judge the world
And the / people with equity*

It had been several, amazing, unbelievable years that the disciples had lived with their Lord, their master, their Christ. He had performed sign after sign among them, confirming his power and might. He had died for them, nailed to a cross, to show them their sins had been atoned for and their transgressions removed. He had risen from the dead. And now he had gathered them together, one last time, on a mountaintop, to bid them farewell.

“I have received all authority and majesty and glory in heaven and on earth. From now on, the world is ruled not by Satan and the forces of sin and death, but by me. The universe is mine. So while you go out into the world proclaim my victory. Declare to the people of the world that the Lord’s Christ is seated at his right hand, and will rule until all enemies are under his feet. I will be with you always as you do this. Many will mock you. Only a few will follow. Gather in my name by the power of my Father’s Spirit.”

“We have now made known our salvation in the sight of all the peoples of the earth. I am the Father’s righteousness, shown openly before you and all the house of Israel. By this message, through your speaking, all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of God.”

*Glory be to the Father, and / to the Son
And / to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning, is now, and / ever shall be
world without / end Amen.*