

## **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

### **Sermon**

One of the things that I have missed most about not being able to gather together to worship God in-person is the singing. I miss the choir and the praise team. I miss learning new songs from Cameroon or Mexico. I miss the feeling of home that you get when you sing those old hymns that we don't even have to pick up the hymnal for anymore.

Because, church is really one of the only places that I ever sing.

And I think it's been affecting me. I know for a fact that there are a lot of reasons for those moments where we feel overwhelmed and anxious lately. But, I think that one of those reasons for me has been that I've stopped singing.

My wife is one of those people who sings in the car. And since she's been working from home and not commuting in to her church lately, I've noticed that every once in a while she gets in the car and takes a drive, to no place in particular, just so that she can sing in the car.

Because singing is so good for us. There have been medical studies that tell us that:

- Singing releases dopamine that helps alleviate nervous energy, helps us feel calmer and happier, and even improves our mental health
- Singing is good exercise for our lungs
  - Regular singing can even improve our lung capacity to give us better sleep and stop snoring
- Singing has even shown to improve our immune system and help us fight off disease

But, even more importantly, I think - singing is one of the ways that God has given us to connect with and express our joy.

- Because even in the midst of all the suffering and loss, the conflict and chaos of the world today - Joy can still survive somewhere deep within our souls, as a fruit of the Spirit of God who dwells within us all and never leaves us on our own. We may cover it up with our worries and our doubts. We may lose it in the midst of all our distractions. And happiness may be fleeting, but Joy is a gift from God that will live on.

It reminds me of Maya Angelou's great poem, "Caged Bird", which, telling the story of that bird behind the bars of the cage, says, "His wings are clipped, and his feet are tied, so he opens his throat: to sing."

- And the singing is an expression of that joy deep down within him, that gift of the Spirit that cannot be taken away, that he can't ever be separated from.
- That knowledge that he is a creation of our Holy God, a beloved member of God's family, whose very existence brings joy to God Himself!
- And we were born for that joy: Presbyterians proclaim in the Westminster Statement of Faith that our one true purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy life with God forever. To en-"joy", to experience joy with God always and without ceasing, from the day we are born until the day we die, and then forevermore in the life we share with Christ.

And singing is only one of the many ways that we can find that joy. You can express it through generosity and service to others. You can find it in relationship with God and other believers, through prayer and praise. The Bible even says that believers will find the fullness of joy in the endurance of the trials and difficulties of our lives - when we see that God goes with us through them all.

So, do not let the circumstances of your lives quench the Spirit of God that lives within you. But, let it sing. And join in with that joyful song. Because we don't need to be in the church building to raise our song to God. But, we can sing out loud - wherever we are. Whether it be in a field with the sheep, in a cage with Maya Angelou's bird, in your car, or right there in your house! Hit the high notes at the top of your lungs and rejoice in the breath that flows through you. Even if you've got an ugly old voice like mine, sing with the joy of a people who are free from the fear of death and sin, free from enslavement to money and power and status, free to live in joyful service to others and to the God who is our salvation - "because the one who calls us is faithful, and our God will set us free."

Amen.

This sermon was first shared with Aurora First Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Doug Friesema. To receive future communications from the church, please contact:

[firstauroraoffice@gmail.com](mailto:firstauroraoffice@gmail.com)

(303) 364-2609

1585 Kingston St.

Aurora, CO 80010

[Aurorafpchurch.com](http://Aurorafpchurch.com)

[facebook.com/aurorafpchurch](https://facebook.com/aurorafpchurch)