WHEN WE GATHER TOGETHER: SING THE WORD

Psalm 98, Colossians 3.12-17

"Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, His praise in the assembly of the godly" (Psalm 149.1).

Singing is a response to what God has done (vv. 1-3)

God determines the way we are to worship Him. God's people are to praise Him by singing, which is why most Christians have valued and created music. God commands His people to sing.

The church sings because God has authored salvation. Singing expresses our understanding of who God is.

Christians use instruments to glorify God (vv. 5-6)

Scripture mentions many instruments in the context of corporate worship. The instruments aid the congregation in singing.

We love a variety of instruments at Providence because it reminds us of God's creativity and the uniqueness of human beings.

The ability to create "organized sound" in the sequence of tones often causes an emotional response. Music that "tells the truth" contains a transcendent quality that can take us beyond material realities.

The church's songs must contain accurate theology

A local church ought not sing thoughtlessly but should have a canon of songs that express true things about God. The words of the songs overlap with a teaching ministry. This is why we sing God's Word.

The songs we sing emphasize what God has done rather than on what I'm going to do. We also want songs that address the Christian's hopes, joys, longings, and fears. Singing laments is constructive because this corresponds to true aspects of the human condition.

Singing is a corporate good of the church

"The God-directed ministry of prayer or praise and the notion of edification are intimately linked in the New Testament. Even 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs', which are expressions of faith and thankfulness to God, are to be considered simultaneously as the means of teaching and admonishing one another" (D. Peterson, *Engaging with God*).

Singing ministers to others. “Worship Wars” are about preferred music styles (which is an important thing). We can help the situation if we think of congregational singing as a way of building up others.

Communal singing puts biblical membership on display because we have unity emerging from diversity (Cf. Colossians 3.12-17). Some of us prefer classical, hip-hop, country, jazz, classic rock, or countless other styles of music. This means that all of us are compromising our preferences to some degree. The principle is that the style must not stunt the voices of the people.

We keep the lights on to remind us we are singing as an assembly. If the room is dark and the lights are only on the platform, it can create congregational passivity.

We sing old songs to connect us to the faithful ones who went before us and we sing new songs to celebrate the creativity of the current generation.

Communal singing reflects spiritual vitality

It is a bad idea to use the music of the church to attract non-believers. The best thing for the church to do is to sing together. This will make a lasting impression on the hard-hearted.

Key Idea: We worship God by singing together.

Application Questions:

Why does God command His people to sing? Discuss what is special about music. For a Christian, what makes a song good?

Why do people (maybe you) find it hard to sing when we’re gathered?

What guidelines should we follow in selecting the style, age, and content of a congregational song?

Share a line from a congregational song that ministered to you in a special way.