

"What Makes Your Heart Sing?"
June 4, 2017

Psalm 104:24-34

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Call to Worship

The church is born in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the church lives today by that same originating power.

What does it mean, that God's Spirit sweeps among us, knocking away our complacency and filling us with the unexpected bounty of joy?

It means that prophecy is fulfilled, and the Gospel proved true!

Prayer of Invocation

O Holy Spirit of God, breathe new life into our souls and blow away all that keeps us from trusting in you. You have called us together this day, and we are here in this house of prayer waiting upon you. Speak to us through your words that will be read, preached, and sung. Quiet our minds and calm our hearts that we may be receptive to your enlightening work. When you send forth your Spirit, we are renewed. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Word

Psalm 104:24-34

Common English Bible

LORD, you have done so many things! You made them all so wisely! The earth is full of your creations!

And then there's the sea, wide and deep, with its countless creatures living things both small and large. There go the ships on it, and Leviathan, which you made, plays in it!

All your creations wait for you to give them their food on time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled completely full!

But when you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust. When you let loose your breath, they are created, and you make the surface of the ground brand-new again.

Let the LORD's glory last forever! Let the LORD rejoice in all he has made! He has only to look at the earth, and it shakes. God just touches the mountains, and they erupt in smoke.

I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I'm still alive. Let my praise be pleasing to him; I'm rejoicing in the LORD!

Living the Word

What makes your heart sing? I have been asking this question all week. It is the title of this summer's sermon series. Each week, I will ask the same question only in more specific ways, the list of questions is in the June Good News Letter. If you don't have one of those, there are some by the front door, on your left as you exit.

Some of you responded this week by email, catching up with me somewhere, or writing me a list - that will work for several of the themes in the weeks ahead. God gives me these unique sermon ideas, but it won't all be revealed, to you or to me, until the summer comes to the end.

By then, if we all do our homework of pondering the questions, watching for God's input and sharing, we will know where God is leading each of us.

This is the intro week of the series, next week I will be at my son's wedding and the following week I will be at Annual Conference. Even so, Rev. Bruce Bartel & Dan Zei, who are filling in, will carry on with their own themes - giving you more time to ponder and respond to me with 'what makes your heart sing.'

On Sunday, June 25, the series will continue with the question: What makes your mouth water? I know my answers, but I want to hear yours. Each week during the series we will sing the song that the choir sang this morning – “10,000 Reasons for my heart to sing”.

I am sure that there are enough answers out there to more than fill the sermons and have us learn what is important to each other and to this church.

Today is Pentecost. Some of us wore red to celebrate the fire of the Holy Spirit that came to the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven. We celebrate Pentecost 50 days after Easter Sunday. Jesus told us that after he was no longer here in body, he would send an advocate to stay with us. Though most of us don't quite understand the Holy Spirit, we can define an advocate:

NOUN

a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy: The Holy Spirit is for you a champion · an upholder · supporter · backer · promoter · proponent · exponent · spokesperson · campaigner · fighter · crusader · propagandist · apostle · apologist · booster · flag-bearer · a libber.

VERB

They advocate for you - publicly recommend or support: The Holy Spirit: recommends for you · prescribes · advises · urges · supports · backs · favors · endorses · upholds · champions · campaigns on behalf of you · speaks for · argues for · lobbies for · promotes you.

God wants you to have all of the things that make your heart sing; it would be like living in Eden. Yet we make choices like deciding we don't deserve God's best in our lives, and then we make a short list of what will make our hearts sing.

The Holy Spirit is always working in each of our lives to urge us toward wholeness with God. Everything good comes by way of the Holy Spirit and God only sends the best for us.

So far the responses that I have gotten pretty much fall into several categories: life blessings, small accomplishments, being with those we love, and experiencing nature around us. Did you know that each one has been a special gift from God, via the Holy Spirit for whomever is willing to receive it? You may have never thought of blessings and accomplishments in that way before.

I want to share three that were given to me this week: One of the summer guests told me last Sunday before leaving that “being up here” makes his heart sing. If there is anyone present, especially us who live here year-round who has forgotten that ‘living up here can make your heart sing’ I hope you can accept that as a blessing this week.

The second one I will share goes like this: “When summer comes and I take my first cup of morning coffee and walk among my flower beds and inquire who needs some help that day? I really do talk to them and they really do respond to the special attention.”

I have to say that just reading this makes my heart sing...You may have guessed it, the second one is from someone who weathers the winters in Hayward and knows how to appreciate the summers.

The third that I am paraphrasing, is from a seasonal member: ‘This church makes my heart sing. My other church is very large. They do missions, but it isn't as visible or as generous as what I see here. When I brought my family, they were teary eyed at the end of worship.

The warmth of the congregation, their willingness to open themselves during joys and concerns – and then care for each other – and the real, over the edge point, is being included as a part of the congregation, when they sing 'Shalom' to each other at the end.'

Now, I know that this is beginning to sound like a summer of sentimental gushy stuff. Some of it may be, yet it is more the opportunity to say some positive things about our lives and our world. If you read the paper and watch the news there is plenty of negative. If you want negative church, it's not here.

If you think it isn't reality to celebrate the best of what God gives us in life, it's OK. Our reality isn't always wonderful and all good. It includes pain and suffering and even numerous mornings without coffee and flowers. Even so, I want us to hear ways to see all that God has for us when we take time to ponder where the Holy Spirit is working in our lives.

My heart has sung at funerals, as we celebrate the life of someone, together as community. My heart has sung when the worst devastations have happened, not only natural disasters like the tornado, but human-made disasters; and I find people coming for the clean-up, and they send money to rebuild lives, and they send cards and prayers and prayer shawls of healing. That makes my heart sing. It is all real, when we can be genuine and real with each other.

Serving Christ to each of you as– Bread and Cup, that makes my heart sing. Some of these things we can plan regularly, such as monthly Holy Communion, or coffee in the morning in the flower bed, but so many of the things we should be celebrating are surprises! How often do we miss the miracles around us which are sent to make our hearts sing?

Thursday morning my son Jeff stopped here. I went outside with him and he said, "Look, mom!" I turned to see a large beautiful moth sunning on the side of this building. Then he said: "Take a picture." The moth was a gift in itself, but later as I pondered the short event, there was something else that touched my heart.

When I was growing up, my mother was always pointing out trees in the fall, a multi-colored sunset, an act of kindness, such as a card that she had received. She started this whole pondering of 'what makes my heart sing.' As I reviewed the picture of the brown and gold moth, I realized that I had done an OK job, of passing that gift of appreciation for the good things in life, to my son. That made my heart sing...

There is an ancient prayer to the Holy Spirit, that I want to share with you now: "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen."