

The Bible's Most Frequent Command – Psalm 47

sermonaudio.com

By Doug Vander Meulen

Bible Text: Psalm 47

Preached on: Sunday, December 31, 2006

Community Baptist Church of Fargo

3535 SW 25th Street

Fargo, North Dakota 58104

Website: www.cbcfargo.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/cbcfargo

This morning, turn to Psalm 47 for the sermon this morning and I'd like to speak to you briefly this morning about the most common commandment in all of the Bible. There is a command that is given more frequently than any other command in the Bible. Do you know what it is? It's not repentance. It's not faith, belief. It's not even the command to love God. And we might say those are all important and maybe even more important but in sheer number of frequency, the command to sing is more prevalent in the Bible than any other. For example, the word "repentance" only appears approximately 32 times in all of the Bible. Did you know that? I was looking this up because I saw this in something I was reading in preparation of the sermon and I couldn't believe that when the author suggested this so I got my little computer and started checking things and according to my Bible software, repentance was 32, maybe 33 or 34, but I would think it was 32 times, but the command to sing is the most frequently repeated command found in the Scriptures, 39 times we are commanded to sing and 32 additional times we declare that we will sing. One writer put it this way, "No commandment is more frequently and emphatically imposed upon God's people in the Old Testament than the duty of singing praises to God. In the New Testament, these commands are renewed and made emphatic. It would seem that God is keenly interested in both that we sing and what we sing." God is keenly interested in that we sing and what we sing.

So this morning I want to talk a little bit about that based on Psalm 47 where we, again, it was just read for us but it says in verse 5, "God has ascended with a shout," and I believe that that is the ascension of Christ found in the book of Acts as he ascends to sit at the right hand of his Father and he shall come in glory to judge both the living and the dead. Christ has ascended to the heavens with a shout, a shout of victory, a shout of triumph. He has defeated sin. He has defeated death. He has overcome all the opposition and he sits at the right hand of his Father gloriously enthroned. This is what in kingly language is the session of Christ. He has been given all rule and authority over everything in heaven and on earth. Everything has been placed under his feet.

He arises with a shout, "The LORD, with the sound of a trumpet." And what is our response? What is the response that Jesus Christ has ascended on high and sits at the right hand of his Father and all of his enemies have been put underneath his feet and he has been given authority over heaven and earth and he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead and his kingdom shall have no end, what is our response?

Verse 6, "Sing praises to God, sing praises; Sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham, For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted." What is our response? Our response is to sing and to sing joyfully. Psalm 100 says, "Come into His presence with a shout of joy."

As one author I quoted says this is reiterated in the New Testament and emphasized. Turn with me over to Colossians in the third chapter. Colossians 3 sounds an awful lot like Psalm 47. In Colossians 3:15 it says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." What I glean from this is one of the hallmarks of the church is that they are a singing lot of people. The church is a singing group. We ought to be known for singing. There ought to be a song on our lips. In fact, God has given us an entire hymnal, but we'll talk about that more in a moment. But whether it be in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the church is known as a singing group. Christians in both the old and new covenant are known as those who sing joyful songs of praise because God has ascended. He sits on the throne. He reigns over heaven and earth. And even here in Colossians 3, what does it mean to allow the peace of Christ to rule in my heart? The peace of Christ in my heart is because he is in control, he is the great Ruler, he is the great King, and nothing can thwart him, nothing can stop him, nothing can in any way cause him to trip or stumble. Jesus Christ has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth and he does all his holy will, and the more I come to know who he is, and the more I come to know what he's doing, and the more I come to know what great confidence I can have that he will accomplish all that he does, the more I am at peace.

Anxiety comes from the sense of things are not under control, things are amiss, things are scary. You know, we all have those childhood experiences that just keep coming back to us and I have one and I don't know why it comes back to me but it does, but I remember I used to have a little Schwinn stingray, remember those bikes? And it was a glorious bike, metallic blue with the metallic silver seat. And I was riding over to my friend's house who lived right across the street from me, a guy named Ricky, and I popped a little wheelie going up into his driveway and his driveway went down slightly and then took a 90° turn into his garage. As I am coming down and I'm making this 90° turn all ready to hit the brakes and to do a little spin-out and all the things that kids do, all of a sudden my brakes weren't working. I had those pedal backward brakes, not hand brakes, and in doing that little wheelie, my kickstand had come down just enough that all of a sudden I couldn't push my brake pedal back to get it to work and there was that fleeting moment which at that time seemed like an hour and a half because you know how everything accelerates, when I realized I can't stop and Ricky's mom's car is in the garage and I'm going to hit that car. I tell you, there was not the peace of Christ in my heart at that moment. My heart was full of anxiety because things were out of control. My bike is moving swiftly to its sudden end and it's going to hurt.

Peace comes when we understand that all things are under the control of our heavenly Father and beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, and therefore we ought to sing. What do you and I have to fear? What do you and I have to worry about? Can the love of God separate us?

Look at Romans 8, if you will. What a beautiful portion of Scripture. He starts by asking these questions about, verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." So what is Jesus doing at this very moment? What was Jesus doing for me at the very moment that my bike flying through that garage?

Verse 35, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation." You see, the love of Christ doesn't promise us no tribulation, does it? It just promises us that we will not be separated from the love of God in the midst of tribulation, "or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For your sake we are [all] being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." And these two beautiful verses, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Do you have anxiety? Do you have concerns? Do you have fear? Do you have depression? You do not have the emotional capacity to rise up and to sing and to exalt and praise God? It's because deep down in your heart of hearts you do not believe that Jesus is on his throne and the peace of Christ is not reigning and ruling in your mind and your heart.

But what does Paul say in Colossians? How does the peace of God come and how will we encourage one another and how will we allow that peace to permeate through us and through one another, overflowing into thankfulness? It's by letting "the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Do you know one of the best ways for us to fight depression is to sing? One of the best ways to fight discouragement is to sing? One of the best ways to be able to take a sad disposition and turn it to a joyful disposition is to sing, but not just to sing any old thing. Some songs don't improve you. Some songs make you all the worse. I remember reading the great testimony of Handel after he performed "The Messiah" in the very first time in London and some Earl came to him and said, "You truly entertained the people. This was great. This was fantastic. This was wonderful." And this Earl meant to compliment Handel and Handel said in response to this compliment, "I am sorry if all I have done is entertained them. I meant to improve them." And there is music that improves you and there is music that corrupts you.

Now, turn one other place and I believe that the word... turn to the book of James and as you're turning there, the word that transforms us, the word that improves us according to Colossians 3:16 is the word of Christ. It is the word of Christ. We'll say a little bit more about that in a moment. But in James 5:13 it says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Then

let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises." Let him sing praises. Does anybody have the King James here this morning? The old King James? Nobody has got a King James? Really? Wow. Oh, my son does. What does the King James say? "Let him sing," what? "Let him sing the psalms." I do not know why all the modern translations have deserted the literal word there but what James wrote is exactly what the King James says, "Let him sing psalms." Are you rejoicing? Great, sing the Psalms. He didn't say you're rejoicing, sing the psalms because they'll bring you down. Sing the psalms. What does Psalm 47 say? "God has ascended. Let us sing. Let us sing joyfully. Let us sing psalms." What does Colossians say? Colossians says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart and let the word of God richly dwell within you and sing psalms."

And I have pointed out to you on repeated occasions in Luke 24 when the disciples are all discouraged, remember the two on the road to Emmaus and Jesus shows up and says it is hidden from their eyes so they will not understand who he is? And he's talking with them and he says, "What's happened? What's going on? Have you not heard?" And they are sitting there discouraged. They are depressed. They are overwhelmed. All of their hopes have been dashed. All of their dreams seemingly have come to nought. That which they thought God had promised to them in the prophets has seemed to have withered and failed and proven to be weak, and Jesus opens their minds and starts to teach them from the law and the prophets and the Psalms, all things concerning him. The book of Psalms is about Christ.

What are we to sing? Psalms in the Old Testament. What does Paul say? We ought to do in thankfulness to God and let the peace of Christ reign in our hearts. Sing the Psalms. What does James say? If you are joyful, do what? Sing the Psalms. The Psalms are ultimately about Christ. The Psalms are about his life. The Psalms are about Christ at so many different levels. For example, listen to this, these are all themes about Christ that are found in the Psalms. His deity, Psalm 8:47, 102, 104. His incarnation, Psalm 22, Psalm 40. Adoration of the Magi, Psalm 72. The baptism of Christ, Psalm 2. Temptation of Christ, Psalm 91. The ministry of Christ, Psalm 146. The obedience of Christ, Psalm 40. The teaching of Christ, Psalm 78. Also about Christ's last week of his life, the triumphal entry, Psalm 118. The cleansing of the temple, Psalm 69. His betrayal, Psalm 41. His rejection, Psalm 35. His trial and mocking, Psalm 69. His crucifixion, Psalm 22. Insults, Psalm 22. Forsaken, also Psalm 22. His death, Psalm 34. One writer put it, also his resurrection in Psalm 16 and his ascension in Psalm 110 and probably the best scholarship of today would say that the book of Hebrews is nothing more, not to say that's not important, nothing more than really an expositional sermon on Psalm 110. The book of Hebrews quite possibly is a sermon exegeting Psalm 110. One writer put it this way, "Nowhere in the New Testament is the eternal sufferings of Christ described as in Psalm 22. There is a sense in which all the Psalms are messianic, Luke 24." Augustine said, "The voice of Christ in his church is well nigh the only voice heard in the Psalms."

Now, let me be really clear and I'll come back and say I'm not arguing this morning for Psalms only, I'm not in any way saying we shouldn't sing hymns and choruses, I'm simply saying the greatest thing that God has given to us for our growth and our enjoyment and our joy and our transformation and our knowledge is the ability to sing

and he has given us a whole book to sing from. Think of it this way: not only is the most often command given in the Bible is to sing, do you know what the longest book in the Bible is? The book of Psalms. Do you know what book Jesus quotes from most of any book in the Bible? The book of Psalms.

Some of you have read, Thomas a Kempis' little book, "Imitation of Christ." Do you know what book he quotes from more than anything else as he writes about the imitation of Christ? The book of Psalms. Luther, in writing a preface to a Psalter that he created, a Psalter in 1531, he says, "The Psalter ought to be precious and dear, were it for nothing else but the clear promise it holds forth respecting Christ's death and resurrection, and its prefiguration of His kingdom and of the whole estate and system of Christianity, insomuch that it might well be entitled a Little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended, and compacted into a Manual. It seems to me as if the Holy Ghost had been pleased to take on Himself the trouble of putting together a short Bible, or book of exemplars, touching the whole of Christianity or all the saints, in order that they who are unable to read the whole Bible may nevertheless find almost the whole sum comprehended in one little book. The Psalter is the very paragon of books."

He went on to say in the second edition to his Psalter, "Every Christian who would abound in prayer and piety ought, in all reason, to make the Psalter his manual; and, moreover, it were well if every Christian so used it and were so expert in it as to have it word for word by heart, and could have it even in his heart as often as he chanced to be called to speak or act, that he might be able to draw forth or employ some sentence out of it, by way of a proverb." He says, "In my opinion, any man who will but make a trial in earnest of the Psalter will very soon bid the other pious prayers and songs adieu, and say, Ah, they have not the sap, the strength, the heart, the fire, that I find in the Psalter; they are too cold, too hard, for my taste!" That's an amazing admission for someone who wrote his own hymns. His own hymns didn't have the sap and didn't have the strength and didn't have the fire for his life that the Psalms did or do.

Calvin put it this way, he says, "Besides there is also here prescribed to us an infallible rule for directing us with respect to the right manner of offering to God the sacrifice of praise. There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendations, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church." Do you want to know what God thinks of his church? God's commitment to his church? You won't find it any clearer than in the Psalms. So, "unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us are celebrated with such splendor of diction. Moreover although the Psalms are replete with all the precepts which serve to frame our life to every part of holiness, piety, and righteousness, yet they will principally teach and train us to bear the cross." That's what the Psalms do.

But there is a problem, isn't there? Most of us don't know the Psalms that way and most of us don't know the Psalms that way because we have read them too narcissistically.

James Montgomery Boice who was probably known more for anything else in his ministry as wanting to be a reformer of worship, James Montgomery Boice is known by those who knew him as a man who really took seriously the need to reform worship, in fact, upon his death an entire volume was written by his compatriots and friends dedicated to him which is about the right praise and reformation of worship. And Boice lamented in a book that was published posthumously that there wasn't enough Psalm singing and he noted that the praise songs of the Psalter do not fall into the trap of narcissism that characterizes so many contemporary praise songs. Instead of self-absorption, they are focused on God and for that reason he argues, "They are such good models for our worship and should be used in worship more often than they are."

I had to look up the word "narcissism." I always have to look that word up. For some reason it doesn't stick in my head. I know it's about self-love. But I looked it up and the dictionary gave it "an inordinate impression of yourself." Why don't we like to sing the Psalms? Because they don't allow us to be impressed with ourselves. Usually when people complain about music, this is the complaint you will hear, "I miss my favorite songs." Well, why are they your favorite songs? "Because I enjoy singing them. They are meaningful to me." Now, there is nothing wrong with having favorite songs. I have a whole list of favorite songs. There is nothing wrong with having favorite hymns. There is nothing wrong with enjoying, I hope you have your favorites but the Psalter does not allow us to be narcissistic because they are so relentlessly God-centered they force you to have to see yourself in light of who God is and what he is doing.

To this day the hymnal of the Church of Scotland is nothing but 150 Psalms. And I remember being at a particular pastor's conference, I'll leave the conference unnamed and I'll leave the pastor unnamed, but he was a minister from the Church of Scotland who came to speak at a very nationally known pastor's conference in which I attended. They had a little praise band up front and they had their little singing group up front and we went for 20 minutes with one song where the leader of the singing group said, "God is good." That was his only line for 20 minutes, "God is good. God is good. God is good." This particular man from Scotland who spoke three times, each time he got up to speak, made a negative comment about the worship. The third time he got up and said, "You know, when I am asked to speak at conferences such as these, I'm always amazed at what God makes me put up with." For 20 minutes, "God is good. God is good. God is good. God is good." You say, "Well, isn't that relentlessly God-centered?" In some type of mind-numbing way, I suppose. But the book of Psalms aren't like that, are they? They are replete with the splendor of all of the great works of God.

A contemporary performer wrote a song to Psalm 8 where he used only the first verse. It's a song that I kind of like, the melody is catchy. It's an old song now, it's probably 20 years old. It said, "O Lord, O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth?" Great words and I thought he did a fair job with the melody but he never told you once why God's name was majestic in all the earth. Psalm 8 does. Psalm 8 tells us exactly why God's name is majestic in all the earth. "He is the one who creates everything and sustains everything and he is the one who is so high and above the created realm that the created realm radiates his glory and his will and his good pleasure. He is sovereign over all

things." And then it raises this question, "What is man that you would even consider who he is? And yet you have made him to reign and rule and have sovereign authority over all your created realm. O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth!" The Psalm tells us that God in his transcendent glory who is not like us, who could never be considered like us, he is so remote to us, he is so different than us, he is wholly other, and in his transcendent, holy otherness, bends himself low to consider your life and my life and has granted you a high calling.

I love Psalm 113. It says, "From the rising of the sun until the time it goes down, the name of the Lord shall be praised. He is high above the nations. His glory is above the heaven and who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?" and then the next verse says, "And he humbles himself." Do you ever think of God as being humble? "He humbles himself to consider the things that are on the earth."

But there's a problem. It's not a problem in this church, I'm thankful, since we have been recovering something of the singing of the Psalms, but one writer put it this way, "The Psalms are the 800 pound gorilla in evangelical worship. There they are, they sit in the middle of our Bibles, the book that provides the content for our worship, they make up the longest book of the Bible, they are the only canonical hymnbook yet they are almost ignored, even by those with highest view of Scripture. Nearly a decade has passed since the Trinity Psalter set all the Psalms to familiar singable tunes. The whole Psalter is easily and inexpensively accessible to hymn singing congregations. Though nearly 20,000 copies have been sold, this number represents less than 10% of the membership of the Presbyterian church of America, James Montgomery Boice's denomination who was advocating to sing Psalms." Then he makes this comment, "Extend the survey to include the broader evangelical world and one would probably find that a typical worshiper is more likely to be struck by lightning on Sunday morning than to sing a Psalm in his church." On the Lord's day in America, you have a greater chance to be struck by lightning than to be in a church that will open up God's ordained hymnbook and sing from it, even in churches that have a high view of the Bible.

So this morning what I simply want to do is to remind us of the wonderful benefit that we have. God has called us to worship him, he calls us to sing to him, and he has wonderfully revealed himself in a set of Psalms so that we could learn to sing them, and in learning to sing them, put in our hearts the very words about Christ and who he is. We'll learn how to praise. We'll learn how to confess. We'll learn how to deal with sorrow. We'll learn how to deal with thanksgiving. We will learn how to trust. Matthew Henry wrote, "There is no one book in the Scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church ever since it was written."

Do you want to have a dynamic devotional life? I encourage you to get one of our red Psalters, take it home and start to learn to sing them. We've got CDs on the back table where you can learn the melodies. Learn to sing them, buy a good commentary on the book of Psalms and take a Psalm a week and master the singing of it, master the content of it, study it, pray over it, and learn to be able to sing joyfully that which is in it. And if

you take one a week or one every two weeks, whatever your schedule, one a month, it doesn't matter, you can spend the rest of your life doing it. You're never going to get done with this because we're never going to get done enjoying the Lord and praising him, amen? But take a Psalm and lead it in worship, lead it in your own home, lead it in your own life and learn to drink deeply from the great songs of Christ that the word of Christ ritually dwell in your heart.

We have been commanded in the Old Testament to sing the Psalms. We have been commanded in the New Testament to sing the Psalms. And we have been promised the rich benefits of Psalms. Athanasius said that the Psalms embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind and the emotions of his soul. In the Psalms, for example, we learn to plunge the depths of despair. We go to the lowest pit, we go to the dark places, we go to the deep mire. In the Psalms we learn what it means to be pursued by enemies. We learn how to deal with what it seems like when God is faraway and distant, when we are lonely, when we are afflicted, when we are needy, when we are despairing. Do you know there are at least three good Psalms that deal directly with depression? Psalm 40, Psalm 42 and Psalm 43. The Psalms deal with the human life that encompasses the cords of death and walking through the valley of the shadows of death and the delighting in the law of God.

The Psalms cover every part of our lives and they even include the Gospel. Luther labeled his favorite Psalms "the Pauline Psalms," Psalm 32, Psalm 51, Psalm 130 and Psalm 143, because they speak of the Gospel. Calvin wrote that the Psalms covered every part, "all the parts of the soul"; that the Holy Spirit has come "has drawn from the life of all the griefs and sorrows and fears and doubts and hopes and cares and perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated." The Psalms are great for us because they encourage us. They unfold Christ for us. They show us God's providences and God's deliverances. They are there or as Luther said, they are the Bible. The whole Bible is right there.

You know, it's hard to master this whole book. Some of you have been reading it for decades and you don't have it mastered yet. Imagine being able to sing all 150 Psalms that cover all the promises, all of the circumstances, all of the deliverances, all of the glories and the greatness of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ and his work and his ministry in such a way that no matter where you are you can sing the Psalms of God. You find yourself in a moment of depression and despair and Psalm 40 springs to mind. God seems far away from you, Psalm 13 springs to mind. You want to sing something of the glory of Christ, Psalm 47 comes to mind.

Or think of it this way. Most of you will remember with great clarity 9/11 and I don't know if this church had a special prayer meeting. I suspect it probably did, but our church did. Most churches, many churches had special prayer meetings and worship services in response to 9/11. What are you going to sing? The Psalms are full of things that deal with this very sort of thing. Psalm 94, "God of vengeance, rise up and give to the nations their worth." Or Psalm 37, "Fear not those who act wickedly." The Psalms are full of all sorts of things. And one writer was saying that as he was listening to Christian radio the day

after 9/11 and all these speakers would come on and they would say their things and then the radio station would cut away to music, how absolutely inappropriate all the music was because there wasn't the depth, there wasn't the content, there wasn't the subject matter that could deal with the great tragedy and devastation of that wicked and horrible day in our lives.

Now, let me just close with these two comments. I kind of already hit them but I would just like to apply them to us in a Gospel oriented way. 1. As I said earlier, the church is characterized, the true church of Jesus Christ is characterized by a singing church. We ought to be known for our singing. Let me make a clarifying note: that doesn't mean we need to sing well. God has not blessed us all with good singing voices. I am prime example number 1, okay? Linda was telling me one day when she was working back in the nursery and at the end of the service when we are singing, I was leading like I am today the closing hymn and the only thing you could hear back there was my amplified voice, couldn't hear any of you singing so I'm doing a little solo for the children in the nursery and one of the kids in all of the splendor and innocence of their little childrenness, childness, says, "Boy, he sings poorly." Or something to that effect. God has not commanded that we sing well, God has commanded that we sing and that we sing joyfully.

Secondly, one reason if you find it hard to sing well, I don't mean well, joyfully, if you find it hard to sing joyfully or you say, "I don't really like to sing," then I think you need to own up to the fact that you are disobedient. God has commanded you to sing. We are to sing.

Number 3: one reason why it's hard to sing is because we are too full of ourselves. We are afraid of what somebody might think next to us when they hear us hit the wrong notes. I assure you, none of you have been laughed at more than I have in your lifetime over what comes out of your mouth when you sing. I sang in an all boys choir in my high school. I think I told you this before. I guarantee you, it is true: a fistfight broke out in the choir room over who was going to have to sit next to me. A real fistfight. I know because I was at the receiving end of some of those punches.

We are full of ourselves. We don't sing the right notes, we don't sing well. One of the greatest experiences I ever had was when I came to saving faith and there was one of the associate pastors of the church that I came to faith at was a true, genuine, certifiable monotone. He hit a low E-flat every time, all the time, exclusively. And this dear brother was not ashamed of that partly because he said in his head he hears all the notes. He's going up and down with everybody else. He does not hear a monotone but it was great because whenever he would sing, and he would sing every Sunday obviously in the congregation, you could always tell who the visitors were because you have never heard anything more horrific than this man singing and when he started to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," everybody is turning around. "What in the world is that?" And I have never known a man to sing more fervently or with more joy and happiness in his heart and could care less about what other people thought because he wasn't there, it was not a talent show, it wasn't one of these reality shows and you might get a recording

career, he was there to praise the Lord God Almighty who had redeemed his soul and God had commanded him to sing, God had purchased his soul, given him the privilege to enter the holy places to sing, and lo and behold, he was going to sing. And I hope that we can capture some of that but when we are afraid to sing and we use that somehow I don't sing well as an excuse not to sing, own that as disobedience and that you are way too full of yourselves.

Number 4: be guarded over what we do sing. Sing the stuff that will improve us. Sing the stuff, that is, you want to sing, I love one of Calvin's comments. I won't read it to you but one of Calvin's comments says he understands there is a different kind of music that you have at the dinner table when you are entertaining people versus what you come to worship God with. It's okay to sing fun songs and ditty songs at the table and we sing some fun ones at our house. We sing about dead skunks in the middle-of-the-road. We sing all sorts of fun things but that's not an appropriate song for the worship of God and to sing those songs that are biblically and doctrinally true, that have Christ relentlessly at the center of it, that speak of all of Christ's glorious works and the preeminent place that we will find that is in the Psalms.

Oh, there are thousands of glorious hymns that we also ought to sing and enjoy and master and delight ourselves in. Earlier in our little prayer meeting we had this morning, we sang, Dylan asked if we could sing number 2 in our hymnal, "How great thou art." What a glorious hymn and what a great thing that a young man would even know that was in there, but to enjoy these things and to make them part of our lives so that when you wake up in the morning they are just there, they are on the tips of your tongue.

Then finally, because Paul says that they are the word of Christ. For all of you who desire to see Christ more clearly, to know him more honestly and truly, to encounter him and to know him beyond just the intellectual level, master the Psalms. You will find the prayer life of Christ there. Almost every one of the Psalms has some type of intra-Trinitarian conversation between he and his Father where he is going to show you what he struggled with, what he wrestled with, what he prayed for, his sorrows and his joys, his fears and his happiness, his concerns and his deliverances. If you want to know Jesus, if you want to know Jesus beyond just the simple facts, if you want to know his heart, his mind, his fear, his joy, his happiness, that's all given to us without having to read between the lines, without having to be novel. It has been given to us in infallible, inerrant, glorious words.

So my prayer for our congregation in the coming year is that we would become a singing church and that we would come not to sing for ourselves or one another but that we would come to offer up out of the fullness of joy songs that we sing and give back to God as sacrifices of praise, as the writer of Hebrews puts it in Hebrews 13, songs in which he is well pleased with, amen? The greatest thing that we can do in our pursuit of enjoying God and glorifying God and enjoying him forever is learning to sing fervently his great hymns back to him. Calvin put it this way, he says that, "There is nothing that we can give to God that we have not first received from him, and in the Psalter we have received the very words of God that are fit for the praise of his name, and when we sing them, it is as if God has put his own words into our mouths to glorify him and to exalt him, knowing

with great confidence that every last one of the words is acceptable to God because they are his words."

Oh, I pray that God would make us a singing church and I pray that I will find out a whole bunch of you who can't sing well, because I'm going to hear you loudly and fervently and that you will stumble upon the notes and stumble upon the melodies just like I, that I will not be the only one changing the melody in the middle of the song, that I won't be the only one changing the key, that we will do it together. We will sing fervently unto the Lord because God has so commanded that we do. And what is the only logical, rational, reasonable thing that you and I could ever do given as Psalm 47 says that Christ has ascended on high with a shout and a trumpet of victory, what is the only logical, rational, reasonable, clearheaded thing that you can do as a result of what Christ has done and where he has gone for you but to sing? Amen?