

Sing Praises

August 9, 2026

Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, and 45b

¹ Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make his deeds known to all people! ² Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord; dwell on all his wondrous works! ³ Give praise to God's holy name! Let the hearts rejoice of all those seeking the Lord! ⁴ Pursue the Lord and his strength; seek his face always!

⁵ Remember the wondrous works he has done, all his marvelous works, and the justice he declared — ⁶ you who are the offspring of Abraham, his servant, and the children of Jacob, his chosen ones...

¹⁶ When God called for a famine in the land, destroying every source of food, ¹⁷ he sent a man ahead of them, who was sold as a slave: it was Joseph. ¹⁸ Joseph's feet hurt in his shackles; his neck was in an iron collar, ¹⁹ until what he predicted actually happened, until what the Lord had said proved him true. ²⁰ The king sent for Joseph and set him free; the ruler of many people released him. ²¹ The king made Joseph master of his house and ruler over everything he owned, ²² to make sure his princes acted according to his will, and to teach wisdom to his advisors... ⁴⁵ Praise the Lord!



Please turn with me to Psalm 105. This is a song of praise, as are many of the Psalms. The Psalms, after all, were Israel's hymnbook. The psalmist encourages us to sing our praises and thanksgivings

to God. In verses 1 and 2 we read, *"Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make his deeds known to all people! Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord; dwell on all his wondrous works!"* As we begin today, we are going to try to do just this: sing praises.

"Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make his deeds known to all people! Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord; dwell on all his wondrous works!"

- Psalm 105:1-2

Here is how it is going to work! First, I invite you to think of something that God has done in your life that you are grateful for. It can be that one big thing, or it can be something relatively small that happened this past week. Maybe it relates back to what you shared during the Passing of the Peace. We're then going to sing the chorus to the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story." Following that I'll invite two or three people to shout out what God has done in your life. Just a simple phrase, a few words. We will then repeat that process a few times: a chorus, a few shout outs to God, a chorus, a few more shout outs. Here we go!

CHORUS

D⁷ **G**
I love to tell the story
G/B C **G**
'Twill be my theme in glory
G **G/B C**
To tell the old old story
G/D D⁷ **G**
Of Jesus and His love

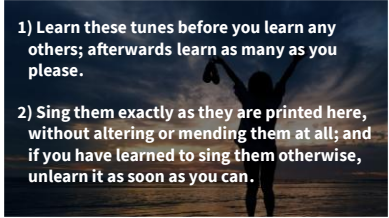
That was fun! That is what a praise break is all about! And now, let us pray...

Loving God, in danger you are our salvation. In loneliness you are our companion. In fear or uncertainty you are our courage. We thank you. We love you. We trust you. We reach for you. Hold us and lead us to life. And now, O God, I ask that you would bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.

As Methodists we were born to do three things: to eat and to sing and to fellowship. Each of us is probably more comfortable with one of these things. But since our beginnings, singing has been at the core of who we are as United Methodists. The power and the passion of the early Methodist movement was found in the singing, in the hymns. While John Wesley was the driving force behind the organization and the lived theology of the movement, it was Charles Wesley who put much of scripture to song. Charles wove scripture and theology into the poetry and beauty of singing. You know Charles' work: Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing. That's just three of 6,000+.

Now John was a huge fan of singing too. He even wrote some directions on how to sing. From page vii of our United Methodist Hymnal, here are John Wesley's "Directions for Singing," abbreviated slightly for this morning's time:

- 1) Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
- 2) Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

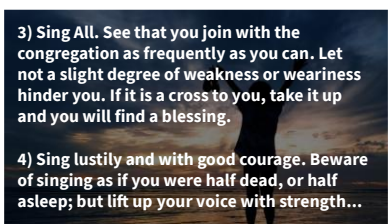


1) Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.

2) Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

Learn the tunes. In their day, Charles and John began writing hymns using a simple pattern. First, pick a bar tune that was well-known. Second, add words of scripture and/or theology to go along with the tune. Third, teach the congregants these new songs. In a day when education was limited to those with means, hymns were ways to teach faith to a mostly illiterate congregation. And sing them as written. Don't add your own little flourishes. We've all heard a version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" we wish we could unhear. Enough said.

- 3) Sing All. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find a blessing.
- 4) Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength...



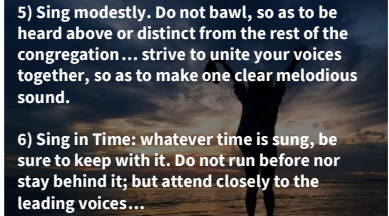
3) Sing All. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find a blessing.

4) Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength...

I love rule three. Show up each Sunday. Why? So that you can learn to sing all the songs. If that is hard for you, John Wesley says, bear that cross. It will be a blessing!

And sing lustily! Sing with some spirit and life about you. With good courage, lift up your voice in strength as you sing along.

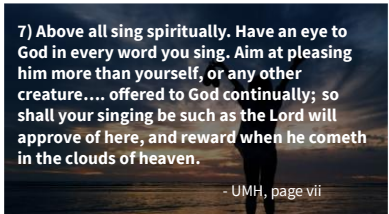
- 5) Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation... strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
- 6) Sing in Time: whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend closely to the leading voices...



Two of the most important directions, right here. As I read these rules on Tuesday and thought of some singers I know, I could just see them nodding their heads on Sunday morning as I read these two: yes, yes, yes! Sing together. Make a beautiful sound to the Lord.

And, lastly, number seven. I believe that the psalmist would circle this one. After all, our songs lifted in praise and worship should be first and foremost for the Lord our God.

- 7) Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature.... offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.



Sing every word of every song to the Lord alone. Yes, others may benefit, but our aim is to first please God with our worship. God doesn't require us to be always on pitch or to be the best singer in the room. God wants our hearts to be all-in for God in our worship and praise.



The Psalms functioned much in the way that the Wesley's hymns functioned. They were written to help the people of God to remember and to learn. Psalm 105 functions in both of these ways. After the opening verses encourage or invite us to give thanks, to sing, to remember God's "*wondrous works*," the psalmist then turns to these wondrous deeds of God. Singing of the acts of God helped the people to remember them. In verses 16-22 the psalmist recalls the story of why Joseph was sold into slavery. The brothers selling Joseph is in Genesis 37 – right where we are in the lectionary readings this week.

In the Psalm, the author unpacks the "why." It is important to remember why God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery. Our faith works the same way. Looking back after a hard or painful experience, we can almost always see God's "why." For the Israelites, the Psalm helps them to remember that God knew that there would be a really bad famine and that this famine would drive Israel to Egypt, desperate for food. God knew that the famine would last seven years – too long for Israel to survive on their own. So God "*sent a man ahead of them*" and "*the King made Joseph master of his house and ruler over everything he owned*" so that one day Joseph could bring his whole family to Egypt so that they would survive the famine.

Now, this is just one of many stories in song that tell of how God has a plan, of how God rescued Israel, of how God is in control of all things. Earlier, as we offered our shout outs to God and sang about how we love to tell the story, many were evidence of God's plans, of God's rescue, and of how God is in charge. These things and more – for us and for Israel – are important to remember not when we have come out on the other side, but when we are still in the thick of it. The Psalms, the songs, the shout-outs are all ways to give us hope when we are in the dark valley or in the emergency room or when we've been cut from a team or when we've broken up or ended a relationship.

When we sing our songs of faith, whether hymns or contemporary songs, we often sing to remember. We sing to remind ourselves that God is at work – even now. We sing in the direst of times, in the worst of circumstances to remind ourselves of hope and of God’s sure and abiding presence. We sing the words because they help us to cling to hope and to hold on to the promises of redemption and restoration and salvation. For those new to the faith, our hymns and songs are teaching tools, like those early hymns were in John and Charles Wesley’s day.

We also sing to remember how God has been at work – in the past. The Psalms remind us of how God was at work in the lives of many different people. Today’s Psalm reminds us of how God was at work, preparing a person and place for the Israelites to find refuge and food during the famine. Within that overarching story, there are also other smaller stories, little events that acted like stepping stones. Joseph’s life was not a straight line. First, he was sent along with some Ishmaelite traders, off into a life of slavery. But God worked in that mess, and he was sold into a good situation. God prospered everything Joseph did. Until he was accused by Potiphar’s wife and ended up in jail. Again, God went to work. Joseph eventually became the second in charge in all of Egypt, just below Pharaoh himself.

Joseph was, in many ways, an instrument of God’s hand. The underlying message for us is that we too could be God’s instruments. We could be God’s undercover agent, working behind the scenes, in quiet ways, building the kingdom of God here and now. Or we might be more vocal instruments, planting seeds of faith in those new to the faith, being the yeast embedded in the community, acting as salt to give flavor to our workplaces or homes or to provide traction in a slippery time. We could be modern Josephs, appointed to help lead God’s people through a famine. Today that famine might focus on food scarcity. Or it might be a famine of faith or community or peace or civility or love.

My friends, these are the songs that need sung today. We need to be the songs that show others God's love and God's good plan for us and our earth. We need to be the songs that offer healing in illness and comfort in pain. Maybe the song we sing is a song from the scriptures – Amazing Grace or In the Garden, Jesus Loves Me or Rock of Ages, Jesus Messiah or Broken Vessels. Or maybe we sing praises with our very lives, using words when necessary, a song when applicable.

So mt friends, I encourage you this week to sing a song. Sing a song others know, sing a song that only you know. Share the light and love of Christ with others this week. May we each go and do that every day. Alleluia and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. How can your life be a song of love or hope or peace or whatever someone in need might find helpful, encouraging, comforting...? How can you sing it?
- 2) *Pray*. Do you have a song or hymn that you turn to again and again? Seek holy guidance about who else might need to hear that hymn or song?
- 3) *Study*. Read Psalm 105:7-15. This is another small story of how God was at work. When have you felt insignificant, wandering, oppressed? How did God work in your life?