

Sing to the LORD
a new song, for he has
done marvelous things!

-Psalm 98:1

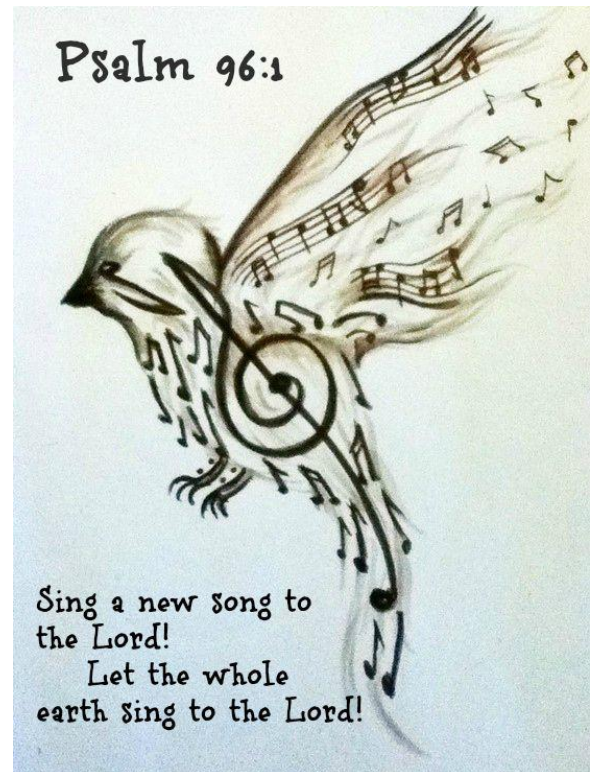
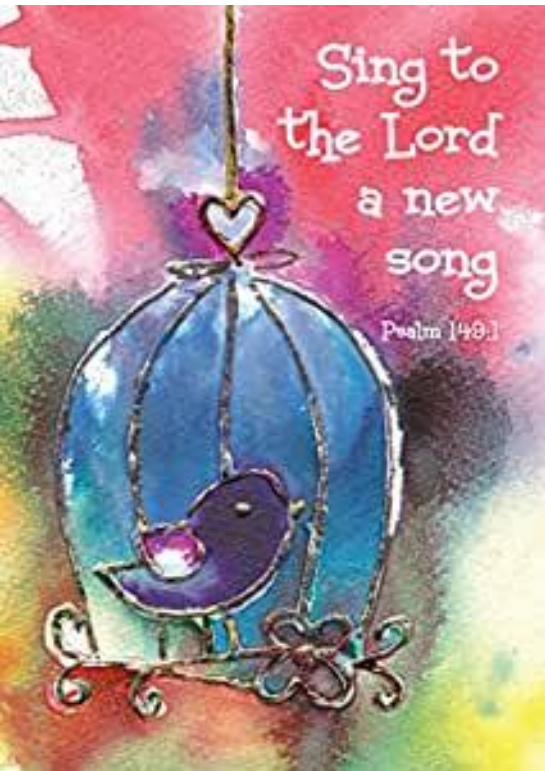


Sing to the Lord a
new song
His praise from the
ends of the earth
Isaiah 42 : 10



Sing a new song to the Lord!

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Sing a new song to the Lord!

- Says who?
- Why? what was wrong with the old song?
- Do we really have to?
- What is the new song for today?

Says who?

Command: Psalmists and the prophet Isaiah

- In the psalms we are commanded 4 times to sing a new song to the Lord (psalms 33, 96, 98, 149) this includes everyone and in every place, includes playing instruments (well) and shouting (if you can't sing well maybe you can shout!)
- Isaiah shares God's word to sing a new song "you who go down to the sea and all that is in it, you islands and all who live in them" (Isaiah 42:10) – seems like pretty much all of us, (not just those of us who like to walk by the sea)

Commands in the Psalms

Psalm 33:2-4 Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy.

Psalm 96 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

Psalm 98 Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

Psalm 149 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people.

Says who?

Example:

- David suggests that the new song about how God has worked in his life will help other people discover God for themselves (Ps 40)
*He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.*
- It also seems to be an intentional part of his worship (Ps 144:9):
*I will sing a new song to you, my God;
on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you*
- New songs seem to be popular in heaven: the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing to the Lord a new song (Revelation 5:9)
- the 144,000 sing a new song before the throne (Revelation 14:3)
- It seems like new songs are the order of the day for eternity, so we better get used to it.

Why? What was wrong with the old songs?

- It's not that anything is wrong with the old one, **but** new ones are needed.
- Jesus talks about new wine needing to be put in new wineskins (Luke 5). In a new situation, new ways of operating are needed.
- When the era of the Holy Spirit came there were some big changes to the way people worshipped and not all of these went down well with people.
 - The temple wasn't appropriate any more as every person became the temple of the Holy Spirit. Sacrifices weren't needed as Jesus had made the one perfect sacrifice on the cross.
 - The role of prophecy changed from giving God's direction to building up the church as everyone was now able to be filled with the Spirit and hear from God directly.
 - Circumcision for Jewish men was no longer the requirement for acceptance by God and repentance and baptism became the way of joining God's people.
- Basically lots of stuff changed and not everyone liked it, some wanted to hang onto the old ways of doing things. We are not so different!

Do we really have to?

Possible responses and their consequences:

- No – but we might miss out on all the fun
- Yes – this is our chance to join in with what God is doing next.

This is not just about “singing” of course, our worship and response to God is much more than this and includes every way we operate in church and life

Lockdown has been difficult. What else is changing?

- As we look around the world there is increased pressure for change on racism, not just in relation to the recent police murder of a suspect in the US. Inequality between people is being highlighted as the lockdown affects people unequally.
- Governments are threatened by this time of shaking – their power base is wobbly and there are moves which might result in extending authoritarian control by China, Hong Kong, Russia and the USA.
- There is the potential for people to re-examine our relationship with nature. Lockdown has shown it is possible to stop doing things which pollute the atmosphere if the motivation is strong enough. Maybe there will be a will to change the behaviours which lead to climate change.

What is new about the song in this pandemic?

- **Where** we sing has changed: we are out of our buildings and in our homes more. Because the temple is not a building but every believer, that should not matter so much. Maybe it helps us not to put our confidence in buildings and structures which might become distractions or even idols.
- The church as a whole may have to do things with reduced resources as income falls from hall rents or fundraising events. The churches where people have learned to give regularly rather than support fundraising events will have an advantage here, but giving may reduce as a result of reductions in people's income. This may have a knock on effect on world mission and charities.
- It is a strange landscape and varies so much. For some less is more and they have a sense of relief about things not being required of them. For others there is great suffering and loss.

What is new about the song in this pandemic?

- **How** we sing has changed: it doesn't matter so much if we sing in tune (unless we are the worship leader in the virtual service!). God hears our hearts singing. How we look is less relevant as we join in a virtual service or worship in our homes, unless we are in a zoom meeting or a video call (but no one can see if we have pyjamas on under the table!).
- Christians have to decide how we sing to the Lord and about the Lord. Perhaps it's time for us to write new songs of lament as we mourn with those who mourn? Perhaps we can do that personally in our own times with God? There will still be songs of thanksgiving and praise, and also of hope and redemption as we offer Jesus to the world.

What is new about the song in this pandemic?

- The song may become more **authentic** as things are stripped away – maybe painfully if we have lost a job, have reduced income, we are missing friends and family, grieving for someone who has died without being able to say goodbye.
- Perhaps the idol of safety and security has been dethroned – we know we are not in control and need to trust God instead of ourselves.
- There is a fresh opportunity to act as one international church family. Leaders are calling for unity. How do we live this out?

New ways of worship and outreach

- There is no list of what we need to do to reach our world with the good news of Jesus, but just now is a good time to be asking God for His ideas and to inspire our creativity.
- Many people have said that the church is not closed – just operating differently as traditional approaches are barred. Some examples:
 - We have a friend who has been reaching out to young people who like gaming - clearly a way of operating that can work well on line.
 - Food banks and social outreach are needed more than ever and Christians are at work in feeding and encouraging folk who are struggling.

New ways of worship and outreach

- On line services, prayer meetings and alpha courses are drawing large numbers and people who don't call themselves Christians are praying too.
- People have been getting to talk to their neighbours more – people seem more inclined to chat on their doorsteps or when they meet on a walk. Now would be a great time to start praying for your neighbours – for God to bless them and for them to get curious about Jesus.
- Outdoors may be a better place to meet in the future, so outdoor church could be a good way to go.
- The unit for the early church was an extended household – now small and local seems a more sustainable way to do church than large gatherings.
- I have noticed that the place I go to pray (the black rock and beach) has become very popular with other people walking there. It's good that my sacred space is shared now.

A Prayer

- Lord we come to humble ourselves – our nation and world has so much need of you and the people are grieving, angry and confused. We wanted to be in control but we discovered that we are not. It is hard to trust you when so much has been shaken.
- We repent and turn to you and ask you to heal our land and world. We ask for your priorities to become ours.
- People are looking for hope and direction, please may we be part of your revival solution?
- Teach us the new song that you would like us to sing. Help us to hear the song you are singing to us and be courageous enough to dance to your tune.

Amen

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 – a good place to end

If I ever shut off the supply of rain from the skies or order the locusts to eat the crops or send a plague on my people, and my people, my God-defined people, respond by humbling themselves, praying, seeking my presence, and turning their backs on their wicked lives, I'll be there ready for you: I'll listen from heaven, forgive their sins, and restore their land to health.