

A New Song

Psalm 33:1-22 on January 2, 2022

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Please read Psalm 33:1-22 before going further in this transcript.

Most of us have at least a few good old, classic songs that we absolutely love. Those songs whose lyrics and melodies are just SO familiar to us, that they seem to magically transport us through time. They bring us back to a place of comfort, good feelings, and great memories of the good old days. Songs like these are a virtual time machine for our souls! Back in the day, I absolutely loved listening to the famous disc jockey, Casey Kasem. For most of my teenage years, I'd spend my New Year's Eve listening to "American Top 40." This was a radio program where he would count down the top 40 songs from that year. (Does you remember these?) It was wonderful! I'd sit there in my bedroom recording all of my personal favorites on my boom box. It was right around then that our world made an incredible leap forward in technology >>> the invention of 90-minute cassette tape!¹ (You see, before then, you could only record a paltry 60 minutes of music!) Psalm 33:3 gives us this command, "Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy." This is a 2nd person plural imperative, which means that it's giving us a command: "You should ALL sing to Him a new song!" (Yes, have the people with more skill up front leading, but still everyone is urged to SING!) But with so many great OLD songs, why would we ever need any NEW songs? I remember sometimes getting to the end of the 40-song countdown and thinking to myself, "well that's it! This was the best year ever! There is absolutely no way they will ever top last year's top 40! Any yet... somehow or another, at the end of the next calendar year, there I was, recording yet another list of "top 40 songs." Year after year, the new top music just kept pouring in.

Now, to be clear, Psalm 33 is not talking about the "American Top 40." It's talking about worship songs, songs that we sing to the LORD. And also to be clear, the Bible also strongly promotes singing the old, familiar songs as well. In fact, one could argue that the Jewish people had the ultimate list of the "top 150 songs" in the history of mankind. They called them the Psalms. These books of the Bible were designed to be sung, not just read. Many of these Psalms were sung as an annual tradition, year after year, in celebration of God's goodness and greatness. Many of these songs were consistent reminders at important annual feasts and festivals. So please understand, this sermon is NOT an indictment against singing the older songs; not at all. In fact, the thing that prompted me to preach about "A

¹ Not to mention the auto reverse feature, in-car cassette players, and Walkman portable headphone players.

New Song” was a piece of music from way back in the 1700s.² Our E-Free Choir sang it back in 2021. It was a song by Handel called, “Praise the Lord.”³ Here are some of the lyrics: “Praise the Lord. Let songs of joy break forth. Sing alleluia, praise His name forevermore. Shout, sing and dance; come dance and celebrate. Rejoice; let all WITHIN US praise His name.” Amen Mr. Handel! You see, whether the song we’re singing is a “golden oldie” or one that’s “brand new hot off the presses,” the deeper and more penetrating question we should be asking ourselves today is this: “Does everything WITHIN US WANT to praise His name?” And if we really don’t want to sing to the LORD, then what’s hindering us? (Besides maybe not being a great singer.) This very question is why it’s so important for us to consider Psalm 33 today.

We should sing a new song to the LORD...

1) Because it’s fitting for His followers. Psalm 33:1 begins, “Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.” So one of the most compelling reasons for us to “sing joyfully to the LORD,”⁴ is that it’s one of the most fitting things in the entire universe for us humans to do! For those of us who are becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus, “Praise is ‘fitting.’ It fits God because he is worthy and it fits us because [our hearts are designed for it].”⁵

Another reason that we should sing a new song to the LORD is...

2) Because of the LORD’s ongoing faithfulness and unfailing love. Psalm 33:4-5 declare, “For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.” So each new milestone of God’s faithfulness, is an occasion for us to sing Him a new song. Each time He causes the sun to rise; each time God’s mercies are NEW every morning.⁶ These are reasons to worship Him anew! We can also sing a new song to the LORD every time we experience His unfailing love. God hasn’t failed us yet; so let’s not fail to worship Him. Each time we experience His love in our own lives, and each time we witness the success of His love in the lives of others, it’s a fitting occasion for us to sing a new song to Him.

² Imagine how what a loss it would have been if those people who just really loved the music from the 1600s had told Handel, “no thank you, we don’t need any more new music!”

³ Our choir sang this on November 7, 2021. See

https://hymnary.org/text/hallelujah_hallelujah_for_the_lord_god_o

⁴ By the way, LORD is in all CAPS here to indicate this is the Hebrew word, “Yahweh.” This is God’s special covenant name. Yahweh “is the personal name of God, emphasizing his role as Israel’s Redeemer and covenant Lord.” (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 13 footnote on Genesis 2:4.) Some pronounce it “Jehovah,” but Yahweh is more accurate. It means “He is,” but when God speaks about Himself, he says, “I am.” (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 101 footnote on Genesis 3:15.)

⁵ Timothy and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*, Viking, New York, New York, 2015, p. 61.

⁶ See Lamentations 3:22-23.

We should also sing a new song to the Lord...

3) Out of reverence for our Creator. Psalm 33:6-7 declares, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.” God not only created all things, He also maintains and watches over all things day by day. One author puts it this way: God sustains all things, but not like the mythical Greek God Atlas, who merely held the world on his shoulders; God “dynamically holds together all that has been created.”⁷ So, verse 7 is not just a beautiful poetic expression about water, this is the psalmist’s way of expressing that Yahweh remains sovereign over His creation. As we’ve seen, all too clearly again this past year, “water can be a mighty force for devastation [when it’s]...left unchecked and untamed.”⁸ God is the only One who can tame this wild world we live in.⁹ He is the only One who can do things like putting “the sea into jars,” and putting “the deep into storehouses.” God is in constant control, and He alone marks off the boundaries and limits in which we live.¹⁰ ¹¹ Each new day God keeps this world spinning. Each new day He holds all things together by His powerful might. So each new day, is an occasion to worship Him with a new song.

Another reason we should sing a new song to the LORD is...

4) Because His plans and His purposes will prevail. Psalm 33:10-11 says, “The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.” Most of us probably have some plans in place for 2022. There’s nothing wrong with making some plans. In fact, it’s wise to plan ahead. However, we need to hold our plans and our purposes loosely, because only the Lord’s plans will “stand firm forever.”¹² Only His purposes have staying power “through all generations.” And this is yet another reason to praise Him. This world and its plans are transitory at best. It’s never wise to put our trust in a particular nation or in a particular political leader. Their power and purposes are EASILY thwarted. In fact, take a look at verse 10. It says that God actively “foils the plans of the nations,” and He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. Psalm 2 asks the question: “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? [later it goes on to say]...The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.” God is not worried or perplexed by the problems in this world. He’s

⁷ See Colossians 1:17 and *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2067 footnote on Hebrews 1:2-3, item 5.

⁸ *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1018 footnote on Psalm 33:7.

⁹ See Mark 4:41.

¹⁰ See discussion in *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1018 footnote on Psalm 33:7.

¹¹ Read Job 38:1 through 42:6.

¹² So, even as God’s creation “stood firm” back in verse 9, now the plans of the LORD “stand firm forever” in verse 11.

not wringing His hands worrying what to do! All the evil forces that plot against His goodness, just make God smile, and maybe even laugh out loud once in a while.¹³ God is not subject to anyone else's agenda; He's not swayed by competing priorities or lobbying groups. God will do, what God will do. End of discussion.

Psalm 33:12-15 goes on, "12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance. 13 From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; 14 from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—15 he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do." Verse 12 is clearly referring to Israel, God's special chosen people. This wasn't because of anything great they had done, but because God chose them by His own initiative, early on in mankind's history.¹⁴ That said, verses 13-15 go on to clearly reference ALL mankind, "all who live on earth." As the old children's song tells us, "He's got the whole world in His hands." And so, all mankind is subject to God's almighty plans and His sovereign purposes in this world. Verses 16-17 then reassure us that God is in control, despite the size of any army, despite the strength of any warrior, and despite how many horses¹⁵ or other military weapons that any nation might be trusting in. God is in control.

The closing few verses of Psalm 33 give us one final reason to sing a new song to the LORD:

5) Because our hearts rejoice as we put our hope in Him.¹⁶ And so Psalm 33 began with 3 verses which called us to worship, and then it ends with 3 verses that express yet another reason for rejoicing: the hope that we enjoy when we trust in His holy name. Psalm 33:20-22 concludes, "We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you." Pastor Douglas talked about this kind of hope last Sunday. Not a wondering hope, but a certain hope. A hope that gives us confidence because we're sure of it. Verse 22 repeats God's unfailing love from back in verse 5. We serve a God who never fails; the kind LORD who we can confidently put our trust in. Because we have this sure and certain hope, verse 21 says "In him our HEARTS rejoice." This brings us back full circle to Handel's song from the beginning of this message: "Does everything WITHIN US WANT to praise His name?" To put it in the words of verse 21, is our HEART in it? Do our hearts truly

¹³ Psalm 37:13 says, "but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming."

¹⁴ See Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

¹⁵ "God explicitly prohibited Israelite kinds from trusting in horses for deliverance because God himself would be Israel's warrior." See Deuteronomy 17:16, Proverbs 21:31, and Joshua 10:42. *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1019 footnote on Psalm 33:17.

¹⁶ 1 Samuel 2:1 records Hannah's prayer of praise at her young son Samuel's dedication to the Lord: "Then Hannah prayed and said: 'My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.'"

rejoice in Him? You see, whether we sing a new song to the LORD, or an old song, the source of any genuine praise to the LORD, is our hearts. When the Bible talks about our hearts, it's not just about sentiment, not just our emotions and feelings; our heart also involves our thoughts and our motivations, even down to the very core of our being.¹⁷ So if we are hesitant about rejoicing in the LORD, if our hearts just don't feel like singing a new song to the LORD, then it's vital for us to carefully examine the condition of our hearts!¹⁸ Praising God in song is an outward expression of an inner communion with God.¹⁹ And a lack of that outward expression may be a sign that our inner communion is waning.²⁰ The ramifications of this should deeply concern any Christ-follower. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that we try to judge what's in someone else's heart. (Please don't turn to the person next to you and say, "I don't hear you singing!") But I am suggesting that we take some time to carefully examine our own heart.

What might be hindering you from singing a new song to the LORD?

Maybe it's...

...unconfessed sin in your life.

...a bad attitude or just an overall "grumpiness."

...spiritual complacency from being stuck in a rut of apathy.

...failure to consistently gather with the Lord's people.

What else might it be? Maybe it's...

...all of the distractions of an overly busy life.

...frustrations and anxieties of this seemingly never-ending pandemic.

...a defeated spirit that's been worn down by depression and sadness.

...a life that just isn't panning out the way you thought it would.

Perhaps something else that's not listed here? I hope you'll talk about these hindrances in your Life Group or with a trusted brother or sister in Christ. And I urge us to pray for one another, that God will help us to address any hindrance that's keeping our hearts from fully rejoicing in Him in 2022.

¹⁷ In Biblical language, the heart is "the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thoughts, motivations, courage and action – 'everything you do flows from it.' (Proverbs 4:23)." (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 861 footnote of Psalm 4:7.)

¹⁸ Consider Psalm 42.

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis once said, "Praise is 'inner health made audible.'" C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, Harcourt Brace, San Diego, CA, 1964, p. 94.

²⁰ Consider Romans 12:11.