

New hope sermon - The joys of global worship

Opening Scripture: Ps. 100:

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs . . .
Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him and praise his name, for the Lord is good
And his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

A call to worship, but not just any individual worship. I miss the sights, the sounds, the celebrations of global worship!

Covid has robbed the world of many treasures - in people, in gatherings, in face to face communication, in freedom to travel and be with others we love. In addition, one of the greatest losses for me has been the loss of face-to-face, in-person global worship. Singing songs together like:

We enter Your courts, Lord, with praise and thanksgiving, with hands lifted up
and hearts open wide.
Lord of Glory, work a miracle of love in gift and giving that the world may know
that hope's alive where holy faith is living.
We enter Your courts Lord, with praise and thanksgiving, with hands lifted up
and hearts open wide. (words and music: Steve Stone, Mandina Music).

Or, Africans, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesians, Latinos and Caucasians with hands raised or clapping and feet stomping as we joyfully marched around our home at New Hope house church singing:

We are singing for the Lord is our light. We are singing for the Lord is our light. 2X
We are singing, singing, we are singing, singing, we are singing for the Lord is our light.
We are singing, singing, we are singing, oh hoh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.
(Repeat with joy!) (South African song with a Zulu melody, Hal Hopson)

Or, even singing in as many languages as we had present in the church:

Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me- the Bible tells me so!
(words: Anna Warner, Music; William Bradbury)

How I miss these global worship times. Zoom meetings, as we all sit alone with our computers, do not begin to capture the joy of worship in community with the Lord.

This is obviously God's heart as well. One of the greatest joys of heaven will be to be part of what's described in Revelation 7:

I looked again. I saw a huge crowd, too huge to count. Everyone was there – all the nations and tribes, all races and languages. And they were standing, dressed in white robes and waving palm branches, standing before the throne and the Lamb and heartily singing:
'Salvation to our God on his Throne! Salvation to the Lamb! (The Message)

It will bring extraordinary joy to sing those songs of praise with dear ones we have loved and walked with from so many nations. All Christians have been birthed into a global family of faith and are privileged to have brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers (and grandparents) of so many nations. “God so loved the world . . . !” And loving Him leads us into sharing His love with all His people! Singing together with the word common to all languages – “Hallelujah!”

In my previous church, Christ Community Church of Wheaton, I sought to instill this passion for global community and global worship into church life and Sunday worship. So, about 15 years ago, the church leaders and I commissioned a talented, creative artist to design and make an 8 foot banner to hang at the front of the sanctuary. Her creation had 4 goals: 1. To express the joy of global worship by an African woman worshipper (we had seen a model of this picture from a banner made by African woman); 2. To be done in beautiful satin-like fabrics of many colors, representing many nations; to keep reminding our whole church community that God loves global worship, and to encourage more active worship involvement with our own hands and feet and voice.

Here is what she created:



A picture really doesn't do it justice. But it was exquisite and added so much beauty to our sanctuary. I miss these expressions of beauty in communal worship these days.

What can we do about this in each of our contexts, beloved?

I am still looking for the answer to that question and long to find an international Christ-centered community (where Caucasians are in the minority, but no one race dominates) and be built up in the richness of a walk with God that so many others from different cultures and backgrounds can bring to one another.

And I long to do this together in the midst of the beauty of banners and songs and stories all centered on worship of our Lord Jesus and the privilege of loving and obeying Him together. A community that keeps God's global agenda as the focus and equips and commissions people to go out to wherever in the world God calls them. A community that prays globally, serves globally (often in a pluralistic local context), and calls each member to be all God has created him or her to be. A community that supports each other, intentionally and fervently prays for each other, and holds each other to the highest. A community based on God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and incarnating for the world the reality of Jesus Christ's transforming salvation. A community that brings honor and glory to God.

In the Scattered Flock devotion for Tuesday the 18th this was the theme captured in the scripture from Psalm 33: 18-22:

¹⁸ The eyes of the Lord are upon *even the weakest worshipers* who love him— those who wait in hope and expectation for the strong, steady love of God.

¹⁹ God will deliver them from death, even the certain death of famine, with no one to help.

²⁰ The Lord alone is our radiant hope and we trust in him with all our hearts.

His wrap-around presence will strengthen us. ²¹ As we trust, we rejoice with an uncontained joy flowing from Yahweh! ²²

(the Passion Translation)

May we each find and build up such a global worshipping community that experiences the Spirit's "wrap-around presence," Christ's "uncontained joy," and the Father's "strong steady love."

In His name and for His sake. Amen.

Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson 8/20/20