

**Shepherd of the Springs Lutheran Church
Fourth Sunday after Easter
Text: John 16: 5-15**

Theme: Getting the Spirit to Sing the New Song *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me, concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer, concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. (vss 7-11)*

Today is *Cantate Sunday*, the fourth Sunday after Easter. Our text points us toward three events that will establish the Church of Christ as a peculiar people of God living in the death and resurrection of her Lord. They are the forthcoming ascension of the risen Lord, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the inauguration of the Great Commission. And in the face of these events, we are urged to do some singing - something we Lutherans do pretty well. *Cantate* is the exhortation: *sing! O sing to the Lord a new song! For He hath done marvelous things.* These words in the Introit this morning are taken from the Psalms. They present a prophecy pointing to the promises that Jesus makes to his disciples in the upper room in our Gospel for this day. This new song extols the marvelous works the disciples witnessed the past three years as they traveled with Jesus. But now in the upper room they have come to the climax of these works - to the passion and resurrection of the Lord where he accomplished the righteousness of God for sinners.

This *new* song is the good news that God is gracious to sinners and has taken care of the problem of evil through the seed of the woman; through the son of Abraham, and the son of David; through the *Suffering Servant* . . . through the One that the disciples have been following, listening to, and watching for the past three years. Yes, this new song proclaiming God's gracious redemption for sinners has been around since the beginning. It is an old song, but old song that it might be . . . it was really quite new for the disciples. . . and they had a hard time learning it.

It was difficult for the disciples to grasp just who Jesus is and what He was sent into the world to do. The words and deeds of Jesus often did not seem to get through to them. Remember some of their reactions. On the stilling of the storm, they said, *who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?* After feeding four and then five thousand, they complained: *We are out of bread Jesus, what shall we do.* Having witnessed the Lord's transfiguration, James and John argue about who gets first place when Jesus comes into His Kingdom. But more than these things, the continual teaching of Jesus concerning his passion and resurrection simply received blank stares. The new song of the Gospel was a tough song to learn how to sing because it was radically new. It wasn't anything like what they were used to singing.

They knew the old Law song, the one that God gave to Israel through Moses. They knew - as so many today know - the song that promises a good life now and to come if you will just get your act together and become dedicated and proficient in following the Commandments of God. As the children of Israel sat by the Jordan River, Moses sang God's Law to them and they thought that they were hearing the road to joy, peace, and the bountiful blessings of God. They thought they were listening to Bible-based principles that would transform their lives and bring an abundant life with God and with one another. . . It did not. Rather, it brought faithlessness, disappointment, rebellion, and hardship.

The old song of Law was rehearsed over and over again, but the people simply could not sing it properly. They learned the words but they could not take them to heart. Their hearts were set on other things that revolved around themselves. Their hearts were set on the land filled with milk and honey. They were set on becoming a great nation in the eyes of the world. They were set on receiving the manifold blessings from the Lord. but they had no heart for loving God with all one's heart, mind and soul. They wanted to sing the law into doable principles to be observed for their own glory, not the glory of God. They did not understand that the Law song rendered them just as unrighteous as their godless neighbors.

But now, here sat the disciples with Jesus in the upper room shortly before He is to render the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world and be raised for our justification. They also knew the old law song, but could not sing it by heart. They were constantly hearing about a new song, a Gospel song, but could not make any sense out of the lyrics. To remedy this situation Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit with a three-fold mission that involves teaching us how to sing both songs that God has given to his people. . . the old song and the new song. The Law song and the Gospel - to learn and then to sing them by heart. First, when the Spirit comes he will convict the world concerning sin. The law song was given to make manifest our sinful hearts bent on idolatry . . . not to give us principles by which we could secure favor with God. By the Spirit we are to sing this song as a confession. A confession of sin . . . not that of others, but our sin. If you want to listen to the Spirit who convicts of sin, listen to the Law song as we sing it in our confessional. The Spirit is in the words to convict, and the Spirit is in our hearts to make repentant sorrow . . . to enable us to sing the Law song from the heart.

And since Jesus has fulfilled the Law for us, there is just one thing we are to do, and the Spirit will enable us to do it. To believe in Jesus. To believe that He has fulfilled the Law for us. The Law song gives us not principles for daily living but it sends us to a Savior from sin. It sends us to the new song . . . a righteousness sung first by a gracious God who has taken our miserable condition to heart and done something wonderful about it. Secondly, the Spirit will convict the world not simply of sin but also

of righteousness. Jesus is going to the Father because a righteousness *for us* is accomplished in His death and resurrection.

After our confession of sin this morning, we heard the new song of the Gospel sung by the Lord himself back to us. Remember the lyrics: *I forgive you all your sins*. While the song has several verses, that is the constant refrain of the chorus. *Your sins are forgiven!* What you heard is what you received. And, it was revealed by the Spirit, amplified by the Spirit, and delivered by the Spirit. The new song delivers the goods that save. The new song delivers righteousness and the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It comes to you by the Spirit from your risen and soon to be ascended Lord. And, this is the song that the Church has been given to sing to the nations.

Is all of this new song going to make a difference? Will it really bring a better day? Is it really decisive over the evil powers we are up against? The answer is yes. For thirdly, the Spirit will come to convince us that this is so. The prince of this world, the Devil of Darkness with his song of gloom and doom has been defeated. The new song is God's final song. It delivers the forgiveness of sins and it delivers the spoils of the victory over sin, death and the devil. The judgment of the Devil means that we have been freed in the Spirit's power for life with God in His Kingdom forever. Our singing of the new song today is just a rehearsal by the Spirit for what we shall be singing in eternity. So get in the Spirit! Learn the new song by heart! It's a good thing we Lutherans love to sing. We will be singing this song . . . forever!

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. A-men.