

Why We Sing-Part 2



This is Pastor **Josh Scott** of GracePointe Church in Nashville TN.

“As Progressive Christians, we’re open to the tensions and inconsistencies in the Bible. We know that it can’t live up to impossible, modern standards. We strive to more clearly articulate what Scripture is and isn’t,” The Bible isn’t the Word of God, self-interpreting, a science book, an answer/rule book, inerrant or infallible. The Bible is: a product of community, a library of texts, multi-vocal, a human response to God...”

After reading a couple articles about this church and this issue I decided to watch one of their worship services.

While listening to their service online I noticed this song by **Rachel Platten** in their worship service.

*And oh, truth I guess truth is what you believe in
And faith, I think faith is having a reason
And I know, know love, if your wings are broken
Borrow mine so yours can open too
Even if we can't find heaven (Hey)
I'm gonna stand by you
Even if we can't find heaven
I'll walk through hell with you
Even if we can't find heaven, heaven, heaven, heaven
I'm gonna stand by you*

In a church that sings about nothing being true, or reason being more important than faith, or not finding heaven ...

Since they have discarded truth and faith ... since they’ve given up hope for heaven, it shouldn’t be surprising that they have also turned their back on God’s word.

... you see, what we sing in worship to God does matter.



This is openly gay music artist **Grace Baldrige**. This week she claimed the number one spot on iTunes' Christian album chart.

Baldrige's newly released "Preacher's Kid" knocked Lauren Daigle's album "Look Up Child" from the top of the chart...

- DC Talk member **Kevin Max** praised the album saying, "It's high time Christian music got a shake up with a message of reality & hope beyond the homogenized CCM... kind of historic, pretty amazing."
- **Derek Webb**, the former lead singer of Caedmon's Call tweeted his praise of Baldrige's album

In the modern church where we sing that:

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God (Caleb Culver/Bethel)

'And I stand in awe of you...' (Mark Altrogge-I stand in awe ... and I can tell you from a person conversation I had with him, he will agree with my assessment.) When we get in God's presence we won't stand we will fall on our face and bow.

"Heaven meet earth like a sloppy, wet kiss" (John Mark McMillan-How he loves me)

I will dance, I will sing, O to be mad for my king (Matt Redman-Undignified)

Music from **Bethel music** that teaches such demonic principles as grave soaking, that gold dust and angel feathers fall down on them in worship ... teaches 'name it claim it' 'prosperity gospel' ... they believe your salvation is a product of your efforts.

Hillsong (like Bethel) came out of the Pentecostal movement but have moved into heresy, eastern mysticism.

What we sing matters because what we sing informs what we believe.

The power of music is that the tune, rhythm, instruments, voices ... can be so powerful that we will “compromise our convictions” “violate our faith” and “deny truth” just to keep singing that song.

You see, before Satan convinces you to publicly deny the truth, he will first convince you to sing a lie.

Words matter, what we say matters ... even if we say it to a tune in poetic meter.

God desires for His people to praise Him in spirit, in truth, and in song ... Please allow me to prove it:

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. (Psa. 96:1-2)

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! (Psa. 47:6)

In just three verses we're commanded to sing *seven* times.

There are over 400 **references to singing** and 50 direct **commands to sing** in the Bible.

In Ephesians 5:19 and in Colossians 3:16 the Apostle Paul commands us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

God doesn't just simply tell us to praise him ... He tells us to SING His praises when we gather and meet.

... But why not just pray and preach?

... Why sing?

... Why are God's people throughout history always singing?

Answer: Because God Himself sings.

17 The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zeph. 3:17)

Even Jesus, on the **eve of His crucifixion** look at what He and His disciples were doing on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 26:30)

In **Hebrews 2:12** Jesus says to His father:

"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise." (Heb. 2:12)

In fact, the passage in Ephesians that I referred to earlier says that **one evidence of being filled with the Spirit** is that we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

... singing and making melody "to the Lord with your heart."

So, why do we sing?

Because we worship a triune God who sings ... and HE wants His children to be like him.

... and I might add, that we should not only sing as God sings ...

... but in worship, we should sing only what God would sing ...

... and God cannot lie.

... We must sing the truth about God and about His redemptive work as is taught in scripture.

That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is doing here in Colossians.

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:18-20)

I preached the first half of this sermon 2 weeks ago and it was more of an introduction to what I'm going to say today

... in fact, I took some time to talk about the consequences of society abandoning absolute truth.

I proposed that as a society, because we no longer believe absolute truth about reality (heaven and hell) ...

... then we have no clear answers to the questions **where we came from, why are we here, and what is our purpose.**

I even made the claim that this attitude of abandoning of truth ... is increasing in our world.

... this is why people are acting and living in ways that are becoming increasingly more erratic, irrational, absurd, and unreasonable ...

... we are in the midst of a great battle for truth.

... The purpose of my opening illustrations was to show you that large sections of Christianity are **complicit in this defection** from truth.

Here is a quote from Keith Getty,

“I believe that the modern worship movement is a movement for cultural relevance. It’s a de-Christianizing of God’s people. It’s utterly dangerous ... In a culture where marriage is in a state of confusion, children are growing up in dysfunction, and we can’t even have a frank discussion about social and political issues, what could be more radical than people gathering together to sing about the Christ ... What could be more affirming than the Good News of the Gospel?”

Here, in Colossians 1 Paul, in song, is affirmed the good news of the gospel.

1. The Glorious Reality of the Church

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Let me bullet point and unpack this verse:

- Jesus is the head of His body and His body is the church.
- Repeating the truth of the first stanza (v. 15-17)—Jesus is the beginning, the creator and sustainer of all things.
- Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.
- All of this is true so that Jesus will have the preeminence over everything.

As the “head of the church” (which is his body) that means that He and He alone has **authority, control,** and the power of **decision making** for the church.

We are not given to liberty to deviate from the Word of God just because it suits us ... just because it is pragmatically advantageous.

God is not asking us to vote and decide what positions we will take on the truth ... those decisions were made before the foundation of the world.

Last week, it was reported by the Episcopal news service that the well-known preacher and author **Max Lucado** had been invited to preach in a worship service at the National Cathedral in Washington DC.

... because the National Cathedral affirms the LGBTQ lifestyle there was a great deal of pushback ... but it still happened.

... after the service there was even more push back and of course in the end, those who had invited Lucado, apologized.

And I expected nothing less ...

... what I didn't expect was that Max Lucado would apologize ... and in his written apology he stated that he believed in the "traditional biblical understanding of marriage."

And I am glad he made that clear but, in his apology, he made two very troubling statements.

- *"Faithful people may disagree about what the Bible says about homosexuality ..."*
- *"I share the Cathedral's commitment to building bridges ..."*

One, Jesus is the sole authority over the church, and we are not given the option to change what God has clearly said about morality and truth.

Two, there are just some bridges we are not given the liberty to build ... because the only way you can build those bridges is by tearing down the boundaries God has clearly established.

Christ is not only the source of our faith ... His word has established what the doctrine and belief of our faith **must** be.

This is why the letter of Jude in the New Testament exhorts us to *"earnestly contend for the faith which was delivered to the saints."*

Now I hope you see what Paul is doing here Colossians

... Paul has included a two-stanza hymn that is not about "how we feel" or "what we are going through" ...

... This hymn is a clear declaration of essential biblical truth.

"An authentic generation doesn't begin with catharsis (discarding truth); it has to begin with an authentic picture of the God of the Bible. Over 75 percent of what are called the great hymns of the faith talk about eternity, and the fact that we have peace with God. Yet less than 5 percent of modern worship songs talk about eternity." -Keith Getty

Here, in verse 18, Paul is saying that everything in the church must flow through the Lord Jesus Christ and be under His authority—what we **do**, what we **believe**, and what we **sing**.

Throughout the New Testament we read that Jesus Christ is the ONLY head of His church.

Why? Because Jesus is the one crucified, resurrected, ascended, exalted, and sitting at the Father's right hand.

Jesus makes it very clear in the Great Commission that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him."

This means that Jesus rules over the church with **2 things**: the truth of His unchanging Word, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in and among God's people.

The glorious reality of the Church is that its head is also our savior and our monarch, Jesus Christ!

... and what is Paul singing.

2. The Glorious Logic of Resurrection

Jesus is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead

When Paul says that Jesus is the "beginning" he is not just repeating that Jesus is the creator and sustainer ... as he wrote in verse 15.

Here Paul is stating that Jesus is the beginning BECAUSE he is the "firstborn from the dead."

This is huge!

In order to understand all that Paul means look at what he writes to the Corinthian church.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the **beginning of the restoration** of all things!

This is essential to all that Paul taught and believed.

Before the Damascus Road experience Paul knew of Jesus of Nazareth, he had heard of the miracles, the teachings, and the crucifixion ...

... but Paul did not believe the stories people told of Jesus rising from the dead.

... that is, he didn't believe until he saw the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road.

... That changed everything for Paul and here is why...

... There are 2 key passages.

⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. (Zech. 14:4)

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Dan. 12:2-3)

... Based on these and a few other passages the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead.

... In fact, they believed that someone being resurrected from the dead would signal the end of time and the coming of final judgment.

[This is why the religious leaders tried to kill Lazarus that Jesus had raised from the dead.]

So, when Paul saw the glorified, ascended, resurrected Christ it **radically transformed** him.

... because for Paul this meant that the end of the world was near and the last days were being ushered in.

... the clock was ticking.

In a moment Paul was convinced that Jesus Christ was truly the promised Messiah.

The Christ's death on the cross represented all the power that hell and earth could muster ...

... **in contrast**, the resurrection represented that God's power alone infinitely exceeds the collective power of all created things.

The literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essential cornerstone of our faith **because it says** that everyone who trust in the name of Jesus **will also** be resurrected!

This is why Paul calls Jesus the firstborn from the dead ...

As Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, Jesus is the "first fruit" of the resurrection ...

The glorious reality of the Church is the Jesus Christ is the head and the firstborn from the dead ...

... and because of this we will be with Jesus and live with Him forever!

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:51-57)

People ask, "why did so and so have to die, how is that fair?"

They've got it all wrong! They are asking the wrong question.

Not: why did 'so-and-so' have to die, **BUT:** How is it that everyone who trusts in Christ will live forever!!!

3. The Glorious Song of Reconciliation

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

What does it mean when it says that through Jesus, God has reconciled all things?

... the first thing that is reconciled to God is us

... and the fact that we needed reconciliation means that our relationship with God was broken.

... why was our relationship with God broken?

... Our sin irreparably separated us from God and there was nothing **we could do** to change that awful reality.

However, Paul tells the Colossian church that Jesus Christ has done what we could not do.

... Paul tells the church in Rome the same thing but in more detail.

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Rom. 5:10)

I was evil, wicked, and I was helpless to change my hopeless estate.

I was deserving of all of God's wrath and judgement.

I was God's enemy.

... But here in Colossians, **in this hymn**, we are told that by the blood of his cross, Jesus changed everything.

When Jesus died He **satisfied** God's judgment and **assuaged** God's wrath and now we who were the enemies of God ... (pause) ...

... listen to how Jesus himself said it.

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends ... (Jn. 15:15)

The message of the gospel is the message of reconciliation...

We are reconciled to God!

... in fact, Paul says “reconciled **all things**” ... not just us.

This means that the blood of Christ has not just saved us,

... it has **opened the way** so that all things in creation **will also be made perfect and brand new**.

The **Apostle Peter** writes:

¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet. 3:13)

The Apostle Paul tells the church in Rome:

²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. 8:21)

God isn't just reconciling us and making us perfect and brand new.

... Through the cross of Jesus Christ God is reconciling the whole of creation!

WHAT A GLORIOUS HYMN OF PRAISE!

WHAT we sing should be determined by **WHY** we sing?

If this is just about me, what I want, what I like, what I think, and what I feel ... then it really doesn't matter what I sing ... as long as it pleases me and speaks to me.

BUT if this is about King Jesus and what **He and He alone** has done ...

If this church and worship stuff is actually heading somewhere besides just here in this place at this time...

... then what I sing matters.

The Bible is very clear ... all of this is headed to that great day of “celebration” where the **Resurrected Church will Sing of the glory of God who has reconciled all things to Himself.**

Here is what that will look like.

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:9-10)

This is why we sing, and this is what we sing about!