

HYMN SING SUNDAY
July 22, 2012
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We have spoken to God in song through all the ages. The Jewish community has used the Psalms for worship from ancient times until now. The early Christians also used the Psalms until a body of music known as Gregorian Chant became the musical voice of prayer in medieval times. Psalms and prayers were put into that ethereal music that still is heard today. Gradually other forms of spiritual music were entered into worship. The beloved hymns that we sing each Sunday are rooted in the words of scripture and written in a form that is accessible to all people. – Well some of them at least. Most of us squeak as we attempt the higher range.

What do we use hymns for? Praise. Teaching. Pleading. Praying. In the words we call God by various names. ‘Father’ is the most familiar to many of us. In the following hymn, we proclaim God’s sovereignty with the simplicity that is like a child – expressing core theology in language that reminds us that we are beloved children of the Almighty creator of the universe. Let’s sing *This is my father’s world*:

*This is my Father’s world; and to my listening ears, all
Nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father’s world; I rest me in the thought of
Rocks and trees, of skies and seas, His hand the wonders wrought.*

*This is my Father’s world; Oh, let me ne’er forget That
Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father’s world; why should my heart be sad? The
Lord is king; let the heavens ring. God reigns; let the earth be glad*

As we have begun to grasp the immensity of the Divine we have realized that we need to find other words for the Almighty One – words that describe the closeness of God to our lives and our experiences. One hymn challenges us to view God in different aspects by using surprising descriptions. Let’s sing *Bring Many Names*:

*Bring many names, beautiful and good, celebrate in
Parable and story, holiness in glory, living, loving God.
Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names.*

*Strong mother God, working night and day, planning all the
Wonders of creation, setting each equation, genius at play;
Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God.*

*Warm father God, hugging every child, feeling all the
Strains of human living, caring and forgiving till we’re reconciled;
Hail and Hosanna, warm father God.*

The ancient psalmists looked to nature for inspiration on how to describe God. God is often called Rock and Refuge in the psalms but those ancient poets also looked to the skies and saw the mighty eagle as a symbol for the sheltering God.

Words we sing now have their heritage in the words of the ancients. Let's sing *The care the eagle gives her young*:

*The care the eagle gives her young, safe in her
Lofty nest, is like the tender
Love of God for us made manifest.*

*As when the time to venture comes, she stirs them
Out to flight, so we are pressed to
Boldly try to strive for daring height.*

*And if we flutter helplessly as fledgling
Eagles fall, beneath us lift God's
Mighty wings to bear us, one and all.*

No matter what name or names we find most comforting in our prayers, we understand the great mystery of God's care for all creation and for each of us. One lovely hymn describes that mystery in the cycles of nature. We cherish the symbolism of these words as we sing. No matter what the future holds, God is with us. Let's sing *In the Bulb*

*In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed an apple tree;
In cocoons a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

*There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

Sometimes in prayer, we struggle to understand ourselves; our very human complexities. It seems that we humans will never find a way to achieve the peace that we so desperately crave. In the words of *This is My Song*, that yearning is placed into a plea, not so much to God, but to us – that we may begin to understand that we are all one human family with similar hopes and dreams. Let's sing: *This is My Song*

This is my song, O God of all the nations, a song of
Peace for lands afar and mine. This is my home, the
Country where my heart is; here are my hopes, my
dreams, my holy shrine; but other hearts in other lands are
beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

*My country's skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight
Beams on cloverleaf and pine; but other lands have
Sunlight, too, and clover, and skies are every
Where as blue as mine. O hear my song, O God of all the
Nations, a song of peace for their land and for mine.*

May our lives be gladdened and comforted and challenged by the presence of
God in our hearts and in our voices. Amen.