

***“What Song Will You Sing?”***  
**Psalm 40:1-11**  
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**The Holy Way Presbyterian Church**  
**January 19, 2020**

*I put all my hope in the Lord.  
 He leaned down to me;  
 he listened to my cry for help.  
 He lifted me out of the pit of death,  
 out of the mud and filth,  
 and set my feet on solid rock.  
 He steadied my legs.  
**He put a new song in my mouth,  
 a song of praise for our God.***

*Many people will learn of this and be amazed;  
 they will trust the Lord.  
 Those who put their trust in the Lord,  
 who pay no attention to the proud  
 or to those who follow lies,  
 are truly happy!*

***You, Lord my God!***  
***You’ve done so many things—***  
***your wonderful deeds and your plans for us—***  
***no one can compare with you!***  
*If I were to proclaim and talk about all of them,  
 they would be too numerous to count!*  
*You don’t relish sacrifices or offerings;  
 you don’t require entirely burned offerings or compensation offerings—  
 but you have given me ears!*  
*So I said, “Here I come!  
 I’m inscribed in the written scroll.  
 I want to do your will, my God.  
 Your Instruction is deep within me.”*  
*I’ve told the good news of your righteousness  
 in the great assembly.  
 I didn’t hold anything back—  
 as you well know, Lord!*  
*I didn’t keep your righteousness only to myself.*

*I declared your faithfulness and your salvation.  
I didn't hide your loyal love and trustworthiness  
from the great assembly.  
So now you, Lord—  
don't hold back any of your compassion from me.  
Let your loyal love and faithfulness always protect me,*

It's likely that you've heard me, or another pastor, say that if you ever want to know that you're not alone in what you're feeling, turn to the book of Psalms.

One can find every emotion there, somewhere.

From lament to anger to joy confusion and despair--trust me, it is there!

The psalms cover the wide range of human emotions, which is why I think it can feel quite easy to relate to these ancient songs.

Today we encounter a psalm that, at least in the passages we have before us, verses 1-11, is a psalm of thanksgiving.

The psalmist is recounting when God heard their cries, and answered them.

*"I put all my hope in the Lord,"* proclaims the psalmist.

*"He leaned down to me;*

*he listened to my cry for help.*

*He lifted me out of the pit of death,*

*out of the mud and filth,*

*and set my feet on solid rock.*

*He steadied my legs."*

Have you ever felt that our God has lifted you out of the mud and filth?

Or pulled you from the pit of death?

These are very vivid images.

And maybe they're similar to actual experiences you've had.

Maybe they sound metaphorically like something you've endured.

The psalmist is describing those moments or days or weeks or entire chapters of one's life when things feel hard or scary or hopeless.

**And the psalmist is remembering--is *proclaiming*, in fact--that in that moment, it was the Lord in whom they put all their hope.**

**And it was the Lord who then put the psalmist back on solid rock.**

*If you remember the times when you've felt as low as a pit, or as stuck as one is in the mud, do you also remember what it felt like when God brought you through it?*

*In other words, do you connect God's presence with you in the bad as well as the good?*

Our psalmist is modeling this connection well, describing the hard times and the hope needed in that moment, along with the relief that followed.

And the psalmist shows that their life is not the same afterwards.

***"He put a new song in my mouth,"***  
*the psalmist proclaims!*  
***"a song of praise for our God."***

**When was the last time you sung a song of praise for our God?**

We intend to do this weekly when we gather here to worship.

When we offer our voices up in song and prayer,

And in our offering and our dedication.

Praising our God is a key part of worship.

But what about when you depart from these walls?

Are you singing a song of praise for what God's done in your life?

You should!

We all should!

**Our psalmist today shares their story of hard times and what it meant to be brought through them, in order to encourage others to trust more deeply in God.**

And then to live differently!

The psalmist clarifies that it's not burnt offerings that God requires of us.

Rather, our lives should reflect our gratitude for what God's done!

We should be singing songs of praise with our words and our actions!

*This is how we move forward as God's people.*

**We remember the past, we celebrate the present and we have hope for the future.**

*You, Lord my God!*

*You've done so many things—*

*your wonderful deeds and your plans for us—*

*no one can compare with you!*

These words of trust and remembrance are applicable to so many difficult moments in life.

And no matter what your "pit" feels like, it's important to look for God's presence in the difficult, and the good that follows.

And yet, the more difficult the moment, the harder it often feels to have hope for that future. **But, our hope can often be restored when we look back and see how God has brought us through before.**

So let's do that for a moment, naming the big fat elephant in the room--**Transition**. Transitions are always hard, and pastoral transitions in churches are no exception.

Nine months ago we said good-bye to our beloved pastor of 24 years. And we said good-bye with tears of sadness, as well as tears of joy. For Ray and Robin's new adventure in Tennessee was surely God's plan for them. So even then, we saw the hard wrapped up with the good. How great for them to serve in new ways, closer to family, and yet how hard for us to continue on our journey without them.

But we did.

And I was walking with you, so I saw what you were made of.

You wiped your tears and got back to work.

You pushed forward through the feelings of anxiousness and fear,  
and kept loving each other.

You kept showing up week after week, often hungry for the familiar,  
yet supporting one another through the unfamiliar.

And now, nine months later, you've learned that my position here will end on June 30th. It has been a lot of transition in a short amount of time.

No one can argue that.

And I know, because some of you have told me so,  
that this transition has felt muddy and pit-like for you at times.

And these feelings are normal.

They really are.

The way forward is not yet clear, and many things that used to feel easy are now requiring more energy from us.

It can be exhausting.

And now with Pastor John serving as our Interim Pastor full-time,  
we're being pushed to do some things differently.

And we're adjusting to a new style of pastoral leadership.

But I know you can adjust.

You did so over four years ago when I was brought here to serve with you.

When I was the new kid on the block.

So I know you can do it.

But I've never been worried about *if* you could make it through this transition.

My prayer has always been about *how* you'll do it.

Even now, even in this unsettling, unknown time of transition, I wonder--  
Are you able to look back and remember what God's done here at The Holy Way?

Can you see the times God brought good from hard?

Found a way out of no way?

Can you see that?

Can you remember what that feels like?

I hope you'll try.

Many of you have a long, long history here at this church you love.

So I bet you can remember many times when God has moved this church family from shaky ground to solid ground.

Many of you remember actually breaking ground when this building was just a dream and some blue prints!

And for those of us who are newer, can't we already see how God has worked in the lives of those around us?

How healing has happened to those among us?

Faith has deepened?

How reconciliation can be possible?

Sisters and brothers, the good news is that God has always been at work here at The Holy Way, no matter how long you've been attending.

So my hope and prayer for us is to--

remember the past,

celebrate how God has brought us to the present,

and strive to have hope for the future.

Friends, I believe we have so many reasons to sing.

**And there is always a new song to sing--**

**So what will yours be in this season of transition?**

**How will your life reflect your gratitude and trust in God?**

**And what new song will we sing together as we give thanks to God for all that He has done and all that He will continue to do?**

Because as the psalmist says best--

*You, Lord [our] God! You've done so many things—your wonderful deeds and your plans for us— no one can compare with you!*