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Sermon

December 6th, the 2nd Sunday in Advent

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. AMEN. Our sermon text this morning comes from Psalm 47.

For the choir director. By the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

1 All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God! Sing a loud song! 2 Yes, the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King over all the earth! 3 He subdues peoples under us and nations under our feet. 4 He chooses our inheritance for us. It is the pride of Jacob, whom he loves. Interlude 5 God has ascended with a joyful shout. The Lord goes up with the sound of the ram's horn. 6 Make music for God! Make music! Make music for our King! Make music! 7 For God is the King of all the earth. Make music for him with a wise song. 8 God reigns as king over the nations. God is seated on his holy throne. 9 The nobles of the peoples come together as the people of the God of Abraham. Yes, the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted.

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

Have you heard the songs yet? Last weekend, we talked about how Christmas time is synonymous with that of Christmas music. In my opinion, this music is either one of two things. Either it is silly and is talking about Santa, Frosty, or a reindeer, or it is beautiful and it is actually talking about Jesus.

There is one such song that is praiseworthy that I always find to be ironic. Silent Night. This is a beautiful hymn that is describing the night when Jesus came into the world. It describes a calm and quiet night. It is a silent night, one in which the newborn baby sleeps in heavenly peace.

I find this song to be ironic because the season of Christmas is not very silent for us at all. It is one of the busiest times in the year. Think of a department store the week before Christmas. The season of Christmas unofficially starts on black Friday where traditionally hundreds of thousands of people wait all night long to get their hands on doorbusters. That is not a silent night at all.

But, there is a difference between noise and music. Anyone can make noise by shouting or banging on

something. Music takes more effort to produce. It is methodical and structured. And, of course, it sounds much better.

During this season of Advent, we want to make sure that we aren't just putting more noise out there. Rather, we want to make sure we are making music and praise, worthy of the King who came to this earth. Don't just perpetuate the noise. Make praise to the King of Kings, for He has saved us! Our theme for this morning is "Jesus turns noise into music". Every tongue will one day confess that He is King, believers by faith will praise Him for all that He has done, and horns and songs will ring out in His exaltaion! And so we pray - MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR STRENGTH AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN!!!-

This 47th Psalm was composed by the liturgical group known as the Sons of Korah. Since they were a group that was around for hundreds of years, it's hard to know exactly what the context and setting are for

these particular words of praise. The image that jumps to my mind is perhaps the battle of Jericho, a battle won by musical instruments and shouts. But those particulars aren't important because it sings a song of universal truth here. God is and always will be King of all and He is worthy of our praise.

All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God! Sing a loud song! 2 Yes, the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King over all the earth!

Another thing that is synonymous with Christmas, besides music, is movies. Whenever Christmas rolls around, we always watch these same movies. In my house, we have our particular stable of movies that get dusted off in December.

One such movie, which I watch more than ever because of our young children, is "How the Grinch Stole Christmas". In this movie, we are presented with a character who, unlike the rest of the village, simply hates Christmas. We don't exactly know why he hates it so much. It could be that his shoes were too tight. It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right. But the most likely reason of all may have been that his heart was two sizes too small. Either way, one of the things he simply cannot stand about Christmas is all the noise. He can't stand the noise that the toys make. He can't stand the noise of the games they play. And he cannot stand the noise that the people make when they sing on Christmas morning. He resents it and them, and so he schemes up a plan to prevent all this from coming.

Do you know a grinch? I would doubt it. But it is funny how the obvious villainous grinch compares to people who consider themselves to be non-religious today. What do they do at Christmas? What are they celebrating? If you're not celebrating the birth of your Savior, then what are you actually doing on December 25th? What's the point?

Here in this psalm, our praise occurs because of God and is directed solely to Him. But Jesus is not just the King of the Jews, He is not just the King of the Lutherans, He is the King of the world! He came into this world to pay for its sins. The whole world! Everyone who ever drew breath on this globe, that baby was born for them! Jesus died for everyone.

Whether the person believes that fact is another matter. But the fact remains that the sins of the world were paid for by the innocent life and death of Jesus Christ.

Christ's advent is a reason for us to clap our hands and shout to God, as this Psalm directs. While his first coming is theorized to be a silent night, his second coming will be quite noisy by comparison. **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2Pe 3:10 NKJ)**

That second advent will be witnessed by all. They say there are no atheists in the fox holes, and what a fox hole that day will be! There will be nowhere to hide when the King returns. Jesus is the King over all the earth because He paid for its sin. Whether or not you believe that He paid for your sin is a matter of Spirit worked faith. But zero faith will be required to see Jesus coming in His holy majesty. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. After that, those on His right hand will sing praises into everlasting glory. Those on His left will cry out in pain and agony into everlasting damnation.

God doesn't just want us to make noise to Him. Yes, one day everyone will confess that Jesus is King. They will have to. Knowing Jesus is King is not enough. As James points out, even the Demons believe that Jesus is LORD, and tremble! Our God also desires that we would PRAISE Him. He wants us to make music for Him. We were literally made for it!

6 Make music for God! Make music! Make music for our King! Make music! 7 For God is the King of all the earth. Make music for him with a wise song.

I really like the last part of those verses. Make music for Him...WITH A WISE SONG. The Hebrew word for that concept is "Maskil". You might have heard that word or read it in a different Psalm heading. There are 13 different Psalms are classified as maskils. Those Psalms are basically songs that enforce some lesson of wisdom. They are "wise songs".

Basically, what this means that God doesn't just want noise from us. He wants music. He doesn't just want us to know about Jesus and His teachings. He wants us to believe in them, and apply them to our lives. He wants us to offer Him praises that have a core of doctrine and understanding to them. The only way that we are able to do such a thing is strictly through faith!

I think this is especially important to remember at Christmas time. As the Grinch observed, there is a lot of noise at Christmas. It is a busy time. There is so much to do and so little time to do it. You are buying all kinds of presents, wrapping them, hanging up lights and decorating trees, making plans for Christmas celebrations and company, and the list goes on and on. We can easily get caught up in the preparations and decorations and miss the real message and meaning which we strive to celebrate.

All of those things are nice and there is nothing wrong with a well planned Christmas. But all those things should always point us back to Jesus. Christmas presents should remind us that God gave us the ultimate present of His Holy Son. Christmas lights should remind us of the Light of Jesus shining through the darkness of sin. Getting together with family to celebrate Christmas should remind us that one day we gather to worship the king in glory along with the entire family of faith. Don't let the noise at Christmas drown out the music of the life-saving gospel.

Also, don't let the noise drown out your song. Sing your Maskil to the LORD! Praise Him with understanding! Paul wrote in Colossians **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:16-17 NKJ)**

The only way we can sing a wise song, or as another translation puts it, "**Sing praises with understanding**", is by having faith and the Word.

As the writer to the Hebrews put it, **by faith we understand...(Heb 11.3)**. By faith, we understand what the Word says. By faith, we understand that we were born dead in our trespasses and sins. By faith, we understand that those sins were washed away in our baptism by water and the Word. By faith, we understand that even despite that baptism, we still have the Old Adam dwelling inside of us, and we continue to trespass and violate God's holy law. By faith, we understand that we need a Savior to pay for these sins which would drag us to hell. By faith, we understand that Jesus is that very same Savior, the promised Messiah, who did indeed pay for those sins on the cross. By faith, we understand that He rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven. By faith, we understand that not only did He pay for those sins, but we now are credited with His righteousness. By faith, we understand that when His second advent comes, we will be taken with Him into paradise. By faith, we understand that we are saved by Jesus!!!

When you understand that, again through faith, how can you not sing for joy? That is the reason we have such a musical liturgy in our worship service. It is responsive because it's not just the Word of the pastor which is important, it is the congregation's confessions and praise which is equally important! We make music for our King, because how can we not? As Jesus told the Pharisees who rebuked Him for the crowd praising Him on Palm Sunday, **"I tell you, if these people would be silent, the stones would cry out."** (Luke 19.40 EHV)

Yes, we praise Jesus the King for all the things He has done for us. We praise Him because He is exalted. We may not be able to see this now, but it doesn't mean it's not true. He is exalted, and our praise is simply a foreshadowing of the fact being painfully obvious to all! **5 God has ascended with a joyful shout. The Lord goes up with the sound of the ram's horn.**

When we read these words, obviously we think about Jesus ascending into heaven. Perhaps for the Old Testament believer, they would think about a different picture. When the Israelites wandered in the

wilderness, they were led by Moses. But there were also led by God Himself. They would follow the pillar of smoke by day, and fire by night. It is described in the book of numbers: **Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. 18 At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. (Num 9:17-18 NKJ)**

What an awesome thing, to be physically led by God and physically reminded of His presence. But we have something even greater. We have God before us always even though we don't see Him. Where 2 or 3 are gathered together, Jesus is there in the midst of them. We also have the Word anywhere we go. We have it memorized and printed. We also have been given the Holy Sacrament of Communion which we have the privilege of partaking in this morning. Instead of a pillar of smoke and fire which could only be seen, we have the body and blood of Jesus which is to be TASTED! This is given for the forgiveness of our sins. We know that we have been forgiven, but Jesus also gives us the gift of tangible evidence of that same forgiveness. Again, just another blessing on the long list of things we should be praising Him for!

The Grinch is not the only Christmas movie on rotation in my house. I was recently rewatching a Christmas movie that I had seen probably over 50 times, and a certain line hit me. The main character was struggling with believing in Santa Claus and the north pole. Another character then reminded him that he was missing the point. The character says, "Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing."

This is not a particularly profound statement. In fact, it is a quite common theme in most Christmas movies. It's not profound, actually, it's quite nonsensical. "Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing." What does that even really mean?

Well, in the context of the Christmas movie, it means that you don't have to see the actual Santa Claus to

know that he is real. First, you believe it, then you see it, or know it.

It's quite unfortunate that this is so typically used for Santa Claus, the reindeer, and his workshop because all those things of course don't exist. It's unfortunate it gets used for these fictitious things because the principle so aptly applies to what we believe in. We, too, do not physically see God. We don't see a pillar of smoke or fire. We don't see Jesus...because He is not here! He has, like this psalm says, **ascended with a joyful shout.** We don't have to see Jesus ascend to know that right now He is exalted at the right hand of God the Father. We know it! We know it by faith! Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, and said **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, 19 and just how surpassingly great his power is for us who believe. 20 It is as great as the working of his mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Eph 1:18-21 EHV)**

God has exalted Jesus Christ. He was raised up on a cross to pay for our sins, He was raised from the dead to secure our justification, and He was raised up into heaven to plead for us before the throne of God. **God reigns as king over the nations. God is seated on his holy throne. 9 The nobles of the peoples come together as the people of the God of Abraham. Yes, the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted.**

Jesus reigns right now. He is the King of the world. Nothing can happen in the world without Him allowing it to happen. Even now, He is on the throne and is in control of all things. The book of Acts tells us that right before Stephen was about to be martyred, he saw this picture that this psalm paints for us. **But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens**

opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (Act 7:55-56 NKJ) Stephen saw it. We will see it too. We know He is exalted despite not seeing it now. But we know that one day, we will indeed see it fully in glory.

Dear Christian friends, that is the beauty of Christmas. It's not about being kind and charitable to others every December. It's about how great God has been to us every single day. It's not about believing that if I am good then I will be rewarded under the Christmas tree. It's about believing that I am not good, in fact, I am sinful, and despite all this corrupt evil inside of me, God loves me anyway and sends His Son to die for me on the tree of the cross. It's not about believing in a most wonderful time of year where dreams magically come true. It's about believing in the miraculous virgin birth that fulfilled God's promise of salvation to mankind and made our future with Him in heaven a reality!

The Grinch only saw the Christmas celebrations of the Whos to be NOISE NOISE NOISE! But once he stole Christmas from them, and took away all the luxuries, he eagerly awaited to hear their songs of weeping. *But this sound wasn't sad! Why, this sound sounded glad! Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small, Was singing without any presents at all! He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came! Somehow or other, it came just the same!*

I love this moment, as unrealistic as it might be. I love it because it reminds us about what Christmas is all about and why we should sing praises now and always. Take away all the extras from Christmas. Take away the gifts and the gift wrapping. Take away the lights and the trees. Take away the food and the company. All those things are great, but to focus on them is to miss the point. They are noise. The music of our Christmas hearts sings of praise for God. Praise for sending His Son to save us from our sins. That is the real meaning of Christmas, and it is a beautiful sound indeed. Therefore let us, now and always, sing praises to our God. He has saved His people from their sins, and this is truly worth celebrating! All praise

and thanks be to Jesus Christ, our highly exalted LORD and God, now and always. AMEN!!!