

5 Learn the Joyful Sound

“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord.” (Psalm 89:15)

The word “acclaim” in Psalm 89:15 seems to imply an action on our part. Look up the word in the dictionary and you will find that one of the meanings for acclaim is “to shout approval.” There is, indeed, joy to be found in those who learn to shout their approval and praise unto God. But a closer look at the text reveals *God’s action*. The English Standard Version is helpful in shedding light on this: *“Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face.”* The festal (festival) shout mentioned refers to an event in one of the most precious of festivals to Jewish people—the Year of Jubilee. The history of this great festival is found in Leviticus 25. It begins with God’s command that Israel allow the land to rest every seventh year. No crops or cultivation. The seventh year was to be a Sabbath year as the land rested. No planting, picking of fruit, or harvesting of any kind. Israel was asked to trust God that He would provide for their needs during this time:

“You may ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?’ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in” (Leviticus 25:20-22).

What an incredible promise—God is promising them a triple harvest. Next, God commanded that the people observe seven consecutive cycles of Sabbaths for the land—49 years of trusting that God would

provide for their needs and then some. After these seven seven-year periods, the fiftieth year was to be a Year of Jubilee. When that year arrived, there would be a sounding of trumpets. (The word Jubilee means “the clamoring of trumpets.”)

“Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan” (Leviticus 25:9).

The joyful sound of the trumpet could be heard throughout the land—in every village and every city. Much like the ringing of church bells in our day, the trumpets would joyfully sound. What made their sound so joyful is that this marked the canceling of all debts and restored all goods to the original owner. It freed every servant. If a farmer had fallen into hard times, the Year of Jubilee returned his land and possibly even his family to him. The Year of Jubilee enabled a person to say, “Nothing in my past can be held against me. I am free. That which I lost has been given back to me.”

Those who learned the meaning of the sound of the trumpets were so joyful as it filled them with confidence and hope even in the midst of depressing and difficult times. Those who knew the joyful sound became fearless as they walked through life. They may be afflicted, but their hearts are at rest in knowing the joyful sound.

The echoes of this joyous sound reverberate

throughout the pages of the New Testament. The message Christ proclaims is that *this is* our year of the Jubilee. It is so fitting that in His first sermon to His own hometown, Jesus would stand up and say,

“The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

In Christ, I know that my past does not have to be held against me. That which I lost in Adam’s fall, I have now regained in being able to call God my Father. The inheritance is mine once again. Blessed are those who know and have learned the joyful sound.

It is not a sound that I must wait to hear once every seven years or every fifty. The joyful sound is heard when I drink of His blood and eat of His body and hear the words, “The body of Christ, given and shed for you.” Can you hear the joyful sound in that? It is our Lord proclaiming release to you and me in our poverty and blindness. The joyful sound is heard in the liturgy of the church when the

pastor pronounces in the stead and by the command of Jesus the forgiveness for our rebellion and disobedience. The joyful sound is heard in the splashing of water with the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Time after time the joyful sound is heard as God shouts His approval of us on account of what Jesus has done on our behalf. Read and ponder the words of Romans 8:1: “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” The past is forgotten. The trumpets are blasting. Blessed are those who have learned the joyful sound.

There are many ways in which we can respond to Jesus in mission. We can pray, we can serve, we can tell, but there is no more important response than first learning and hearing the joyful sound within our own being.

Prayer: Jesus, it is because of you that I hear and know the joyful sound. I have heard the joyful sound of the Father’s shout of approval for me. It is all because of you. Now it is my turn. I want to shout my approval and praise of you. You alone deserve that, and it is my joy to offer you it with all of my heart and soul and might. To you alone belong glory, honor, wealth, power, riches and blessing. Now and forevermore. **Amen.**

Challenge: On the next Lord’s Day, when you are in worship, listen for the joyful sounds in the hymns you sing, the liturgy, the Word and the prayers. Listen again for the same joyful sounds the next time you witness a Baptism or receive the Lord’s Supper.

Scripture Reading: Leviticus 23-25

From the Book of Concord: “In the first place, we have a clear text in the very words of Christ, ‘DO THIS in remembrance of me.’ These are words that instruct and command us, urging all those who want to be Christians to partake of the sacrament. Therefore, whoever wants to be a disciple of Christ—it is those to whom he is speaking here—must faithfully hold to this sacrament, not from compulsion, forced by humans, but to obey and please the Lord Christ. However, you may say, ‘But the words are added, ‘as often as you do it’; so he compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice.’ Answer: That is true, but it does not say that we should never partake of it. Indeed, precisely his words, ‘as often as you do it,’ imply that we should do it frequently. And they are added because he wishes the sacrament to be free, not bound to a special time like the Passover, which the Jews were obligated to eat only once a year, precisely on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first full moon, without variation of a single day. He means to say: ‘I am instituting a Passover or Supper for you, which you shall enjoy not just on this one evening of the year, but frequently, whenever and wherever you will, according to everyone’s opportunity and need, being bound to no special place or time’ (although the pope afterward perverted it and turned it back into a Jewish feast)” (The Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, p. 471.45-48).