

The Christian faith is, indeed, a singing faith. And the song is moving across the face of the earth in our day. From the global south to the global east. From there to Middle East, new Christians are hearing the Word of God preached and they are responding in sacred song.

And, now, with that cursory review (and it is only that; so much more should be said) of the Reformation and music, we must move to the fullness of Scripture to derive something directly from God's Word, tonight, about sacred music and its use Gospel usefulness to us as God's people. However we will limit ourselves to only a few passages and seek to derive from them what I will now call a sevenfold ministry of sacred song. The passages that I would have you look at would be [Exodus 15:1-18](#), Psalms 66, [Hebrews 2:12](#), and [Revelation 15:3](#). I want to read these and then give my thoughts on them.

Let us then carefully derive a seven-fold ministry of sacred song from these passages;

## 1. Sacred Song is directed to God

Exodus 15 is called the song of Moses because of the very reason that Moses sang this song to the Lord. The relationship between the covenant God—and it is the covenant name of God, given in [Exodus 15:1](#)—and his servant Moses is a doctrinal truth which produces a veritable bubbling over of the glory of God in the soul of Moses. Now we notice in the last text that I read, that is, the last book of the Bible, that we will be singing the song of Moses in eternity future. For there in [Revelation 15:3](#), we read,

“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb...”

There! Did you see it? Moses, according to [Revelation 15:3](#), that is according to the Lord Jesus Christ Revelation to St. John, tells us that Moses' song was about Jesus Christ!

In Psalm 66 the congregation of Israel is told to sing to God.

## 2. Sacred Song is about God and shared with each other or self

In the passages before us, in Psalm 66, for instance, in verse 8, the psalmist directs the people to “Bless our God who people; let the sound of his praise be heard...” We are to sing to God but we also sing horizontally—to each other. We are told by Paul in [Colossians 3:16](#) to,

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” ([Colossians 3.16 ESV](#))

We can think of “How Firm a Foundation Ye Saints of the Lord,” in which we are encouraged to stand strong in the faith once delivered to the saints. It is a great hymn but its direction is towards the Body of Christ to “admonish one another.”

There is no greater balm for the soul than to come to church and stand and sing the hymns of the Church. I like to use hymns in weddings as well as funerals as well as Communion services and in all the services of the Church—for this reason: we are encouraged in the Word of God in sacred song and strengthened by sacred song that is shared with each other. And when I am in need, when you are in need, there is great Gospel consolation in singing, even as David would sing to himself in the Psalms.

How clear is the text of Hebrews on this subject: “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

But let us see a third truth about sacred song:

### **3. Sacred song begins with the inspired Word of God.**

We are told to sing Psalms. Indeed, we know that Christ sang the Psalms in synagogue worship as he was upon the earth. The music of the Church should be the Psalms. It is a good practice for a Reformed church to read the Word, preach the Word, pray the Word, as well as sing the Word. It is good and right that we should seek to sing the very words of Scripture. We are most familiar in doing that with Psalms. But we do that also with hymns like “Great is Thy Faithfulness,”<sup>[1]</sup> which is a direct quote from [Lamentations 3.23](#)<sup>[2]</sup>. That is also an example of how we move from singing inspired text to human composition. And that is the fourth thing to say about the Gospel and Sacred Music.


### **4. Sacred song is composed by humans under the direction of Scripture**


Now I admit that there are those in the Body of Christ and perhaps some here who would disagree with me on this one. But I see that this is actually a COMMAND! This is what Paul is commanding us in [Colossians 3:16](#)<sup>[3]</sup>, but it is also what the Psalmist is directing us to do in Psalm 66:

“Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!”

The child’s sounds are perfected into praise. The very sounds of the trees and the stars are said to be making music to God—how much more the human heart and the human voice? Thus, we raise our own voices and instruments to God and join the celestial and terrestrial bodies to sing with our very created beings to the Creator God.

### **5. Sacred song is a private offering of personal devotion**

“I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats.” ([Psalm 66:13-15](#) )

“But truly God has listened; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” ([Psalm 66.19](#) )

These personal times of worship are revealed all through the Word of God, and given to us as examples. We pray and preach and sing to ourselves to encourage ourselves as David is said to have encouraged himself in the Lord.

But hymnody sung alone must also become useful by a larger congregation. And that is our next point.

## **6. Sacred song is a public offering of corporate worship**

Sacred Song in corporate worship is what Moses wrote in Exodus 15. It is the context for so many of the songs of the Bible, and particularly in the Psalms. Our hymns should be useful beyond ourselves. The hymns of the Church should be faithful to Scripture, displaying the fullness of Redemptive history in Christ Jesus, and drawing forth some doctrine that exalts God or blesses or admonishes the saints and usually all the above! The accompanying music should not overwhelm the message but carry it. The musical phrasing should be excellent, fit for the King of Kings, representing our very best, yet accessible by all generations gathered in community.

## **7. Sacred song is eternal.**

Finally, let me say this: Preaching will go away. Singing will never stop. I will be out of a job. John Haines<sup>[2]</sup> will still have one!

Peggy Noonan wrote in her book, *On Speaking Well*, that the most important things are said the simplest.; like, “I miss you;” or I love you.” Sometimes sacred song is simple and yet profound.

My Aunt Eva, who was born in 1897, used to love the nineteenth century Gospel hymn, “When Upon Life’s Billows.” Many will know it by the name of its refrain: “Count Your Blessings.” The lyrics are so meek, just like Aunt Eva. Yet the message is so doctrinally pure, just like the Bible she taught me. The hymn seems quaint and yet it can be very powerful. It is praise to God. It is an encouragement to each other. I used to think that some of those hymns were *too* simple. But then I got sick. I spent days wondering if I would ever rise again to work, much less preach and sing. I would sit on the front porch, this past spring, and began to try to sing what I remembered from her in my heart,

“When upon lights billows you are tempest-tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings—name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Count your blessings—name them one by one; Count your blessings—see what God

has done; Count your blessings—name them one by one; Count your many blessings—see what God has done.”[\[3\]](#)

I realized that even in this simple Gospel song, often sung at evening services when I grew up, the truth of our texts:

“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.” ([Psalm 66:16](#)<sup>Ⓛ</sup>).

This weekend we sing praises to Him for the gift of His Son, and the blessing of His Word, which leads to the overflow of our hearts, in a language that is reserved for the Lord and the Church, which we call sacred song.

I invite you to learn the Word and then the Word—even the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord—will cause us sing the songs of Zion. We should be practicing now. We will be singing for a long, long time.

NOTE:

We are offering a free download of a new single, “I Glory in the Cross.” The song was written after a time of illness. Rather than write more about it, I will offer this song as an autumn gift and pray that the Lord will use the words and music in your life to glorify Himself and bring good to you. That is my prayer.

Here is the [link](#) to the free download of [“I Glory in the Cross.”](#)

And here are the lyrics:

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Nguồn : <http://michaelmilton.org/2011/10/30/a-singing-faith-the-reformation-and-music/>