

Songs Of Victory  
Exodus 15:1-21  
August 30, 2020  
Rev. Dave Dorst  
CenterPoint Church

Read Exodus 15:1-21

*“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*  
(Hebrews 4:12)

### **Introduction:**

In the year 1792, there was a group of settlers that was composed of former soldiers in Canada as well as former slaves who had worked American plantations. They banded together to relocate to Sierra Leone in Africa on land that they called the “Province of Freedom.” All of the settlers were professing Christians. When they came ashore, they began to sing a hymn with these lyrics: *“Awake and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! Wake every heart and every tongue, to praise the Savior’s Name. Sing on your heavenly way, ye ransomed sinners, sing! Sing on, rejoicing every day in Christ, the eternal King!”* This hymn summed up their journey from captivity to deliverance and a land of their own. God had blessed them and brought them through so much that their natural response was to burst into song, a song of praise rejoicing in their eternal King.<sup>1</sup>

Most cultures have songs that were composed after winning major battles. Our national anthem was written by Francis Scott Key after a major naval victory over the British in Baltimore Harbor in the War of 1812. Think of sports and singing crowds. Doesn’t a crowd that celebrates their team by singing a song in unison just heighten the enjoyment of the sport? I think of people singing “Ole, ole, ole, ole” at soccer matches with arms draped around each other’s shoulders; so much more gratifying than just cheering. When I was at Baylor University, at the end of football and basketball games, after the yelling, cheering, and high fiving, all the of students and usually the team as well would stop, hold up one hand imitating a Bear paw, and start singing, “That Good Old Baylor Line.” Then we all felt unified, and if we had won, we were proud of our team and our school, and if we lost, we were still loyal and united.

Music is such a powerful art. Words can be powerful on their own (I hope so since I’m a preacher), but when they are set to the right melody, the meaning of the words can be made more beautiful and poignant. And singing with others is a powerful feeling. Have you ever been in a stadium full of people singing the same song that everyone knows the words to? We went to see Billy Joel at the Washington National’s stadium and most of the songs had the entire crowd belting out every word. Singing in worship can be even more powerful because the words aren’t just about a guy sitting at his piano in a bar or about his uptown girl, right? They are about the God of the Universe and His eternal plans to save and redeem His people. I have sometimes teared up with the emotion of songs when the lyrics, the melody, and the occasion all came together to just pierce my heart and remind me of God’s love and Jesus’ sacrifice. I remember seeing a video of Andrew Peterson singing his song “Is He Worthy” at a conference with both a Gospel choir and thousands of believers in the audience joining in. And even though he wrote the song, recorded it, and had performed it live many times, he still got choked up and had a hard time singing through the song because he was so

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), p. 86

overwhelmed at the power of the singing. “‘Ah, music,’ smiled Dumbledore through a thicket of bearded grey, ‘A magic beyond all we do here!’”<sup>2</sup>

Our sermon text today is a song. A victory song. It’s called the song of Moses, but it’s the song of the whole community. One expert in the Hebrew language said that Moses’ “song is written in beautiful Hebrew poetry which cannot be fully captured in translation.”<sup>3</sup> But it is a stirring song, even in English, rich with truth about God that we need to be reminded of. I’ve divided the song into three sections, we’ll call them stanzas, to help us look at it more closely.

### **I. Stanza One: God’s Character and Actions Praised (vv. 1-6)**

*1 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. 2 The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. 3 The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name. 4 “Pharaoh’s chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. 5 The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. 6 Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.*

*“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.”* That word “for” is important. Worship, praise, and thanksgiving are a response to what God has done. “I will sing because I know all that the Lord has done on my behalf and for all that He is.” One of the critiques of modern worship music that I think is valid is that there are songs that tell us to praise Him, but they don’t give us any reasons why. Listen to the lyrics of one song: *“I just want to praise you / Lift my hands and say I love you / You are everything to me / And I exalt Your holy name. I exalt Your holy name / I exalt Your holy name on high / O I just want to praise You / Lift my hands and say I love You...”* and then it repeats a bunch. I’m sure it’s a nice song (nothing wrong with praising and telling God we love Him), but give us something to praise God specifically about. “You redeemed my life from the pit” for instance, or “You’re rich in love and slow to anger” or “Jesus died in my place and paid for my sins.” Those are things that I can sing and know why I’m praising. And Moses’ song is full of reasons.

Verse 2: *“The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.”* God is a personal God – *my* strength, *my* song, and *my* salvation. That doesn’t mean I get to design a God that I like, God is who He is and has revealed Himself to be in history and in the Scriptures. We don’t say “*my* God” as a way of saying “the God I like” or “the God who conforms to my image,” but as a privilege to walk in a personal relationship with Him. He is God of the whole nation of Israel and of the whole extended universal Church of all time, but He is also the God of each individual believer – *my* God, *your* God.

The Lord is a warrior or a man of war, as verse 3 says. I’m not sure that’s in the Top Ten ways that we think of God. We think of Him as Creator, God is love, God is an eternal being, God is the source of all wisdom, God is a judge, God is our Father, there are a ton of ways we think about God before we think of Him as a “man of war.” And yet, this is not the only place that God shows up as a warrior in the Scriptures. The prophets like Isaiah and Zephaniah call God a victorious warrior. Colossians 2:15 describes God as fighting for us, disarming the principalities and powers of the world and triumphing over them in the drama of the cross of Jesus. Revelation 19:11,14 – *“The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war... and the armies of heaven... were following Him.”*) Eventually God will destroy Satan and all of His enemies.

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<sup>2</sup> J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (New York: Scholastic, 1999), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Prager, *Exodus: God, Slavery, and Freedom* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2018), p. 169.

For God to be a God of justice, He must be both love and warrior. A righteous warrior protects the weak and vulnerable, that is the noblest calling for the soldier.

It may seem wrong to our modern ears to hear God's people rejoicing at the death of a huge group of people, but this was an army that was coming to slaughter a defenseless group of people after having enslaved them for years. This was God's judgment on the Egyptians. Moses and the Hebrews didn't have to lift a sword; Moses just lifted his staff when God told him to and then He brought the waves crashing down on Pharaoh and his army.

## II. Stanza Two: God's Actions to Defeat the Enemy (vv. 7-12)

*<sup>7</sup> In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. <sup>8</sup> At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. <sup>9</sup> The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'*

*<sup>10</sup> You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. <sup>11</sup> "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? <sup>12</sup> You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.*

It's interesting that it's not really clear back in Exodus chapter 13 when Pharaoh decides to pursue the Israelites whom He had just released, whether the Egyptians were coming after the Hebrews to simply recapture and re-enslave them, or if they were coming to kill them. Having read these verses, we know it was the latter. Verse 9 describes six different ways that the enemy boasted at how they were overpowering the Hebrews: pursuing, overtaking, diving the spoil, filling their desire, drawing a sword, and destroying them. How did God match "might for might" with all these descriptions of the enemies threatening actions? I love verse 10: "*You blew with your wind.*" He didn't need chariots and weapons. He simply blew the wind that sent the towers of waters crashing down and drowning the entire Egyptian army.

Verse 11 says, "*Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?*" This is not implying that God is just the best of a whole bunch of gods. It is a way of saying that there are no other gods, that any names out there are false gods. This is coming at the end of God's attack on Egypt and the ways that the plagues showed that Egypt's gods were powerless – that the Nile river gods could not keep it from turning to blood; the gods that protected the livestock could not prevent the pestilence that killed the cattle; the sun gods could not stop the three days of complete darkness. The answer to the rhetorical question: "Who is like you... majestic, awesome, doing wonders?" is a resounding "No one!" Not because they are far inferior, but because they don't exist.

Verse 12: "*You stretched out Your right hand; the earth **swallowed** them.*" God's power swallowed up His enemies. This is what happens when man's power and the forces of darkness go up against God's power – God's power overwhelms everything, it swallows up the enemy's forces in victory. Back in chapter 7, Aaron's staff had **swallowed up** the staffs of the false court magicians in a foreshadowing of the Egyptian army being swallowed up by the sea. But the greatest victory that God would accomplish would be described in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57: "*Death is **swallowed up** in victory.*' *'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Jesus' perfect life ensured that the grave could not hold Him, that hell and eternal punishment could not claim Him. Though He paid the penalty for our sins by dying, He had no sins of His own, so God raised Him up in victory. He was victorious over death so that Christians are not defeated by death, but in Him have victory over it.

The final stanza turns its gaze from the past to what is ahead.

### III. Stanza Three: God's Love in the Future (vv. 13-21)

*<sup>13</sup> "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. <sup>14</sup> The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. <sup>15</sup> Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. <sup>16</sup> Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. <sup>17</sup> You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. <sup>18</sup> The Lord will reign forever and ever." <sup>19</sup> For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. <sup>20</sup> Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. <sup>21</sup> And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."*

This last section looks ahead to where God is taking the Israelites. Verses 13 and 17 especially, look ahead in faith to the time when God will establish the Israelites in their own land and the place where they will worship. Verse 13 tells why God is blessing His people this way – it's because of His "*hesed*" (spell for those taking notes) - that's the Hebrew word that means "steadfast love" - "*You have led in your **hesed** the people whom you have redeemed.*" This is one of those words that come up over and over in the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms, that is worth making sure we understand what an amazing word it is. God's *hesed* is His covenant love, His loyalty to His people, His commitment to keep faith with all of His promises. Even when the people are wayward and unfaithful, He keeps faith. Lamentations 3:22 says, "*The steadfast love (**hesed**) of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to end.*"

Part of Israel's future will be having to wage war against the pagan tribes that stand in their way of them reaching the Promised Land; verses 14-15 list Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Canaan – these are some of the tribes that Israel will have to meet in battle. Even though they didn't have instant news back then, the surrounding nations heard about Israel's amazing victory over Egypt, and they trembled in terror and dread. Verse 16 says they "*are still as a stone,*" which means they were petrified with fear. Egypt was a powerful nation, so if Israel, a bunch of slaves, could defeat Egypt, they must have a powerful God on their side; which brings glory to God.

The end of Moses' song is the amazing and obviously true statement – "*The Lord will reign forever and ever.*" Most of us have another song running through our minds when we hear that line, don't we? Handel's *Messiah*, "The Hallelujah Chorus." We can't really fathom God's eternal being, His existence from alpha to omega, from the beginning to the end. But we need to be reminded of that from time to time in life, don't we? We lose focus, worry so much about our lives, our country, life can seem either mundane or out of control. But nothing is truly out of control if God is reigning from before time began until the end of time, and beyond. Everything on earth has an expiration date. Only the things that become part of God's eternal kingdom will last forever with Him, including us, His people.

Looking at verses 20-21, the Hebrew women have not had enough singing and dancing, so in the last couple verses they start back up with Miriam, Moses' sister, leading them. Beth Jones said, "To dance is to reach for a word that doesn't exist, to sing the heart song of a thousand generations, to

feel the meaning of a moment in time.”<sup>4</sup> I’m sure the short sentence in verse 21 is not their whole song, it probably just echoed Moses’ song so closely that he didn’t record it all. It’s actually almost identical to the first line of Moses’ song, so perhaps, this was a chorus that was sung in between stanzas of the longer song, it’s not real clear. What is clear is that the whole community celebrates!

If you don’t like to sing in church, I understand. Some folks don’t have the greatest voices, it can be embarrassing when you can’t hit the notes, maybe you don’t know a lot of the songs. But I hope that you will consider singing as not optional. If you are really intent on worshipping God, that doesn’t mean just attending the service to just watch and listen; that means joining in. And singing is not just for the pretty voices, it’s for the entire congregation. As my friend, Mark Rist, said, “it’s because we need each other. *I need you to sing this gospel and you need me to sing this gospel.* That’s our kingdom life. And when we *come together* to worship here, we sing, not because the right songs are played, not because our favorite songs are picked, not because we always like the style or content. It is not even because of the competency of those who provide the music. We sing because to sing is to worship.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Music and singing are woven into the entire history of redemption:

-Job 38:7 tells us that at creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth, that *“the morning stars sang together.”*

-In Judges 5, when Deborah and Barak won a great victory, they sang a song of celebration that was a recap of everything God had done to give them victory.

-1 Samuel 18:6 records when David returned from killing Goliath that the women of Israel danced and sang joyful songs.

-The Psalms, of course, are all songs that we just don’t have the original melodies to. Psalm 18, particularly, is a song of deliverance for David from the hand of Saul – *“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.”*

-When the temple was finished under Solomon and the ark was brought to it, 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 records that after the instruments played and the people sang the song *“For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever”* the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, the glory of the Lord.

-Isaiah 51:11 says that when the people of God return to their land after exile and captivity, *“The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion.”*

-Colossians 3:16 exhorts the New Testament church to admonish *“one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

-And the ultimate victory song is described in the book of Revelation? There is a new, or continued, song of Moses that is sung in heaven! It is described as both Moses’ song and Jesus’ song. 15:3-4 says, *“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.’”*

You and I, and all those who have been redeemed by Jesus will join that chorus and we will sing with all our might. All of God’s enemies will be defeated, there will be nothing to fear. We will be in the presence of our great God and Savior, God’s *hesed*, steadfast love will see us through and be shown to us for eternity. We will understand things that we’ve never understood before, we will be

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/10043641.Beth\\_A\\_Jones#:~:text=“To%20dance%20is%20to%20reach%20for%20a%20word,a%20moment%20in%20time.”%20-%20Beth%20Moore%20Jones](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/10043641.Beth_A_Jones#:~:text=“To%20dance%20is%20to%20reach%20for%20a%20word,a%20moment%20in%20time.”%20-%20Beth%20Moore%20Jones)

<sup>5</sup> Mark Rist’s sermon “The Triumph and the Test” from March 6, 2016, found at [www.potomachills.org](http://www.potomachills.org).

in a world free from pain and sin, we will have resurrection bodies, all of our thoughts and feelings will be right and good. And we will sing with joy and gratitude. I don't know about you, but I long for that day. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer: *"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?..."*

Benediction - Romans 8:37-39

*"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*