

Christ Community Covenant Church

February 6, 2011: Celebrate and Remember - Worship with words and song!

George Burns: *"The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, then having the two as close together as possible."*

Those who do not yet know and follow Christ, those who instead follow the world and its lies and laws, neglect and reject God under the guise of openness and plurality. Or more likely they do not know and follow Christ because they simply worship self and their self satisfying pursuits - both are a rejection of God's purpose and demand to be loved and trusted and enjoyed and followed and glorified in everything his creatures do. Or perhaps they have never heard the truth.

But to persuade those who do not yet know and follow Christ will need us to present a new kind of love and freedom and hope and grace with great courage. To make the case of the true God in Christ Jesus in this false god-saturated world, to stand up and say what God wants said, no matter the cost—to have that kind of love and freedom and hope and courage will mean that we must know Him deeply. He must be inside us and be stirring us in spirit and in the truth. He must abide in us and we must abide in him or the world and the selfish demands of the flesh will win out.

We gather together on Sundays as believers in Christ - as Jesus followers - to be bathed in truth and to be stirred up. I hope the bathed in truth part happens in part when we apply ourselves to the sermon. It also happens when we pray and we encounter Truth person to person. And in order to be stirred up we need to encourage each other with the promises of God and the faithfulness of God. We fellowship with others who love God too and like it says in Hebrews 3, "Let us exhort one another every day as long as it is called "today" (v13).

What I am describing is worship. The listening to God's Word, enjoying fellowship and the testimony of believers, encountering the Living God in prayer. It is speaking and singing of God's faithfulness. That is what we are doing this morning.

Now what I am about to say is going to be confusing:

Worship is not the performance of a routine, the following of an order of service. It is not rote prayers and obligatory preaching and memorized anthems. When the angel said to John, who had fallen at his feet, "Don't do that to me. Worship God," he did not mean, recite a creed, or open your hymnal, or listen to a sermon. He meant connect with GOD! Focus on God, not the messenger. Concentrate on God, not the hymn tune or volume or lack of volume. Pursue God, not just knowledge about God. And in all your focusing and concentrating and pursuing after God, seek to stir up your feelings to love him and honor him and admire him and fear him and enjoy him and savor him. So that the world will know!

Corporate worship at 4Cs is the blatant, public savoring of God in the midst of a very seductive self-centered world culture. Worship is the flagrant, open enjoyment of God as the fountain of life. It is a public declaration that God is more to be desired and obeyed beyond all the pleasures of the world and this flesh.

Psalm 89 tells us I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever!

¹ **I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.**

² **For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever;
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."**

⁵ **Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!**

**⁶For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
 Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,
⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
 and awesome above all who are around him?
⁸O LORD God of hosts,
 who is mighty as you are, O LORD,
 with your faithfulness all around you?
⁹You rule the raging of the sea;
 when its waves rise, you still them.
¹¹The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours;
 the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.
¹²The north and the south, you have created them;
 Tabor (to the north) and Hermon (to the south) joyously praise your name.
¹³You have a mighty arm;
 strong is your hand, high your right hand.
¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
 steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.
¹⁵Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
 who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,
¹⁶who exult in your name all the day
 and in your righteousness are exalted.
¹⁷For you are the glory of their strength;
 by your favor our horn is exalted.
¹⁸For our shield belongs to the LORD,
 our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

In a few moments we will begin again our praise of God for what he has done here in our church; in this room, in these halls and these classrooms. Most importantly, in our hearts and souls. Maybe you found Christ here. Maybe you were baptized here. Maybe you had a child dedicated here. Maybe you found healing here. Maybe you found hope here. Maybe you found family here. Maybe you found a spouse here. Be prepared to stir your fellow Christ Followers with words of God's faithfulness and strength and power and mercy and grace. How has 4Cs blessed you through the fellowship of the indwelt?

But before we go back to our sharing, I have these two thoughts:

First, do you see how supreme the psalmist finds God in this poem? Theologians call this character trait of supremacy "Sovereignty." *Holding absolute power and sway in all matters. Supreme in authority and prerogative.*

The psalmist sings of the creativity of God - that He made and rules the Heavens and the Skies, the Seas and the Earth. It is all God's and all these are held together by his strong right hand (v13). When we consider this, we are struck down with humility and profoundly aware of our smallness. We are small and our church is small. But frankly the largest of churches is small compared to the Holy Host of the Lord. Yet God has seen fit to create our church and to draw us to her and to Him. We stand in awe of His love and His grace and mercy that brought us here this morning to be with those we love.

Secondly, Psalms 89:15 in the English Standard translation says "Blessed are the people who know the Festal Shout." The New American Standard calls it the "Joyful Sound." I like Festal Shout. Because we know this call from the mouth of God we rejoice all the day; and God is our strength. All because we know the festal shout! If you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have been forgiven and healed of sin's dark sway. You have been cloaked with the righteousness of Christ and born again by the Spirit of God – you are the most blessed people on earth.

We are blessed because we know of the "Festal Shout" - "Joyful Sound" that the poet sang about in

his worship to God! Let's all shout it together – ready? OK that didn't work - just what is this "Festal Shout?" The "Festal Shout" here is the **teru'ah**, not a vocal shout but the blast of the trumpet calling the people to the festivals. The term also refers to a battle-cry or war-cry that accompanies the attack of his victorious army or "host." For us the Festal Shout is the joyful sounds that brought us to His love and His Kingdom and His family.

The Festal Shout is the sound of the hammer striking the nails that were driven into the hands and feet of our Lord.

The Festal Shout is the sound of the whispers of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to our hearts and draws us closer to God.

The Festal Shout is the sound of the rustling pages as the Lord speaks to us through his Holy Word.

The Festal Shout is the sound of the Kingdom Gospel preached in jails by daring evangelists and in schools by brave students and teachers. In salesrooms by courageous employees and on the streets by recovering alcoholics. This is the Festal Shout.

It is the whisper of victory after a long life that comes with our last breath that frees us from our struggles here because Jesus has conquered Satan, overcome the world, destroyed the power of death and put every enemy of our soul under his feet once and for all time.

The Festal Shout is the sound of the Jubilee Trumpet.

Leviticus 25:9-10, "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."

Every 50 years in the days of the Old Testament, every debt was forgiven, every debtor slave was set free, and all of the property in Israel reverted back to its original owner as each family was allowed to regain their inheritance. On that day we too will hear the singing of the black spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

The Festal Shout is the sound of Jesus' last words upon the cross when he shouted, "It is finished."

Finally, we shall soon hear the Joyful Sound of God's trumpet as he calls his Bride the Church home to heaven:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

What a Joyful Sound that will be! "Blessed are those who hear that Festal Shout!"

Now let's share again of his faithfulness and then sing one last time together in this room in the presence of our God and King.