

THE FOLLOWING IS THE SCRIPT THAT PASTOR STEVE USED TO PREACH FROM. IT IS NOT WRITTEN FOR PUBLICATION, AND MAY CONTAIN TYPOS AND/OR GRAMMATICAL ERRORS. IT MAY ALSO DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE RECORDED SERMON.

Sermon 5 July 2020  
Psalm Beach 4: Sng a New Song

Psalm 40  
Thanksgiving for Deliverance and Prayer for Help  
**To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.**

<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.

<sup>2</sup> He drew me up from the desolate pit,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.

<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Happy are those who make  
the Lord their trust,  
who do not turn to the proud,  
to those who go astray after false gods.

<sup>5</sup> You have multiplied, O Lord my God,  
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;  
none can compare with you.  
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,  
they would be more than can be counted.

<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,  
but you have given me an open ear.  
Burnt offering and sin offering  
you have not required.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Here I am;  
in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

<sup>8</sup> I delight to do your will, O my God;  
your law is within my heart."

<sup>9</sup> I have told the glad news of deliverance  
in the great congregation;  
see, I have not restrained my lips,  
as you know, O Lord.

<sup>10</sup> I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,  
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;  
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
from the great congregation.

- Audio intro
- The year was 1985. Ronald Reagan was in the White House. Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. New Coke was on supermarket shelves, and I was a freshman at Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, Tennessee. In the Spring of 1985, I was nearing the end of my first year at Trevecca. I was not yet 19, but I was old enough to buy concert tickets, and to convince my roommate, Mitch, and my good friend Todd, that we all should hop in Todd's green 1971 Plymouth Road Runner—and take a road trip on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, because four guys from Ireland--Bono, the Edge, Larry Mullen Jr and Adam Clayton—together they called themselves U2-- were going to be playing at the Omni, a 12,000-seat arena in downtown Atlanta, Georgia—just a short four hour drive away. The 29<sup>th</sup> was a Monday, and so I figured we could leave after lunch, and drive back after the concert—we could probably be back to campus by 3 am or so.
- U2 were, and still are, one of my favourite bands, and I remember at the time being pretty impressed that a band could be as popular as they were and considered as cool as they were by so many people, so many of my friends, even when many of their lyrics were so blatantly Christian—I mean, they sang about salvation and sacrifice and love and justice and equality and being peacemakers, and they mentioned Martin Luther King--and Jesus--by name—

they sang songs like “I will Follow” and the chorus of one of my favourite songs of theirs, called “Gloria,” goes “Gloria, in te domine,” Glory to you Lord”—literally. They did not hide their faith or conceal God’s faithfulness from their great congregation of fans. But I knew, of course, that we weren’t going to a campground revival meeting, we were going to a rock concert. And it was going to be awesome.

- To cut to the chase, the 29<sup>th</sup> came, and we set off on our pilgrimage-- the Road Runner made it down I-24 to Chattanooga, and down I-75 South to Atlanta, and right into the downtown area where the Omni was—we drove about 250 miles each way, and it was worth it--it turned out that I was right, the concert was awesome—just absolutely amazing. Bono, the lead singer, was utterly mesmerising and downright prophetic—the way he led the crowd to raise their voices together in song and celebration--at one point just before they sang one of their songs about Martin Luther King, Bono talked about how they had visited the MLK memorial there in Atlanta, that afternoon, and THEN he introduced Coretta Scott King, Dr King’s widow, who had come to the concert as their guest—she was right there, not far from where we were standing--I was dumbfounded. Everyone was in tears. But nothing prepared me or anyone else for what happened at the very end of the show—they had just played “Gloria,” the song I mentioned earlier—and before they sang their last encore, Bono introduced his father who was in the audience—it was his first time seeing them play in the US—and then he turned to the crowd and said, “Sing this with me, this is 40.” And he began to

sing, and a crowd of well over 10 thousand people from all sorts of backgrounds, different races and different ages and nationalities, sang at the top of their voices with him, “I waited patiently for the Lord, He inclined and heard my cry, He brought me up out of the pit, Out of the miry clay-- I will sing, sing a new song”—at a rock concert, at the Omni in Atlanta--I looked around me at the faces beaming, the tears streaming down peoples’ cheeks, and I thought, and maybe it was the first time I had witnessed it, that the Holy Spirit moves where it will, that it is not confined to church buildings or what we think are “sacred spaces”— and the crowd continued to sing with the band, and eventually Bono stopped singing, but the crowd sang on, “I will sing, sing a new song” --and one by one, each member of the band stopped playing and left the stage, but the crowd, thousands of voices strong, sang on—How long to sing this song—the house lights came up, and it was clear that the concert was over, but that great congregation sang on, “I will sing, sing a new song”—and folks began to leave their seats and make their way through the aisles and toward the exits, and still they sang on, “He set my feet upon a rock and made my footsteps firm”— thousands of voices sang on— and the crowd moved out into the parking lots, and into the shadowy streets of downtown Atlanta, still singing, “I will sing, sing a new song”—Mitch and Todd and I found our car, and we kept on singing, just like the throngs of voices around us, “Many will see, Many will see and fear, I will sing, sing a new song,” and as we made our way through the urban avenues and toward the interstate, we rolled down our windows and sang along with the echoing

voices that ascended from all around us, “I will sing, sing a new song”—and as people made their way onto busses and trains, the Spirit continued to move, the song continued, I’ve read that they kept it going for over an hour, this spontaneous choir lifting the words of this Psalm of David, inspired words that had travelled through the ages and now filled the night air, rising from the sultry, darkened streets of Atlanta, Georgia.

- And so, when I hear the powerful words of Psalm 40, I hear the echoes of a song that made its way through time, from the Hebrew Psalmist’s quill to the worshippers in the ancient Temple, to the pen of an Irish songwriter in a modern recording studio, to thousands of young and old, and black and white, concert-goers in April 1985.
- The 40th Psalm is called a Psalm of David, and it is also called a hybrid Psalm. That’s because it’s made of two distinct parts. The first part, verses 1-10, is a psalm of thanksgiving, while verses 11 through 17 are a prayer for deliverance, a supplication—when you read through the Psalm, you will notice that when you get to verse 11, there is a noticeable shift in tone, as if you’re reading an entirely different psalm, and incidently, from verse 13 through to the end of the psalm, verse 17, that whole passage is duplicated in Psalm 70—from verse 13-17, that IS Psalm 70-- so except for verses 11 and 12, that is indeed a different Psalm, and a different KIND of Psalm—a Psalm of disorientation, like Psalm 69 that we looked at last time.
- And so we’re just going to concentrate on verses 1-10 of Psalm 40, this Psalm of re-orientation.

- Now we have looked at Psalms of orientation, Psalm 16 and Psalm 8—those were psalms that describe the way creation works, predictably, in harmony and peace--psalms of orientation talk about the way that the world and life ought to be, the IDEAL--the way the created cosmos is reliable, and equitable, and abundant and generous---God’s in his heaven and all is right with the world.
- But as we saw, not all Psalms are like that because not all of life is like that. Sometimes, disorientation happens, and Psalms of disorientation are Psalms that cry out to God for deliverance. Psalms that sometimes ask God how long he will wait before bringing salvation, and we have looked at a very clear Psalm of disorientation, Psalm 69. You’ll remember it began:
  - Save me, O God,
  - for the waters have come up to my neck.
  - 2 I sink in deep mire,
  - where there is no foothold;
  - I have come into deep waters,
  - and the flood sweeps over me.
  - 3 I am weary with my crying;
  - my throat is parched.
  - My eyes grow dim
  - with waiting for my God.
- And from the beginning of Psalm 40, we see that it is a Psalm that tells the rest of this story—it’s the answer to the question, “and then what

happened?” The Psalmist was weary with crying, tired of waiting, sinking in the mire—but then. . .

- <sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the Lord;  
    he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
<sup>2</sup> He drew me up from the desolate pit,  
    out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
    making my steps secure.
- So then, Psalm 40, at least the first 10 verses of it, is an example of a Psalm of re-orientation. These are psalms that tell the story, with thanksgiving, of the way that God took a situation that seemed hopeless and transformed it, the way that God brought salvation from peril, justice from injustice, liberation from oppression, new life from death.
- When you read Psalm 40, it makes complete sense that it would be one of the the collection called the Tehillim, you’ll remember that means “praises”-- to God, and here in the first OF four stanzas, we see that the Psalmist is praising God-- sharing the good news of salvation, telling others about what has happened. This is, when you really get down to it, a testimony. A first-hand account—the psalmist is saying, “let me tell you what happened to me.”
- And I want to take a little time this morning to walk through these four stanzas, and look at the way that the Psalmist communicates this good news here in this song of thanksgiving, this song of praise

- So here in the first stanza, the Psalmist tells us what has happened—what he did—he waited patiently for the Lord—and what God did. And God did 3 things.
- First, He inclined to me and heard my cry. Now that word “inclined” is an unfamiliar word in English to some of us. If you look at your Psalm Beach Phrase book, you’ll see that the Hebrew there is “natah” and it means to stretch out, to extend, to bend down. The psalmist is reminding us that when he was in despair, he cried out, and he waited, and God stretched out, bent down—God came to him, where he was, in his situation, in the mire, in the pit—I am reminded of that beautiful Squire Parsons hymn, He Came to Me—He Came to me, when I could not come to where he was, he came to me-- when I was bound in chains of sin, when I possessed no hope within, He came to me.
- Surely this reminds us of the way that Jesus came down into humanity and is stretched out on the cross—he came to me—and you.
- But I want you to notice now, that the Psalmist says “He inclined to me, and heard my cry,” and NOT “he heard my cry, and THEN he inclined to me.” No, even before the psalmist cries out, God is already on the move, God is already stretched out, God’s prevenient grace is already at work, pursuing the one in need of salvation.
- First thing God did, he inclined to me and heard my cry.
- Second thing God did: He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

- Now we don't know if the Psalmist is talking about a literal pit and a literal bog or not, but we do know that the word that is translated as "desolate" there in English, the "desolate" pit, that word in Hebrew is shaon—and it means literally, a big noise, a lot of racket—it's used to describe the roaring of the sea, and the rumbling of destruction, the uproar of riots and turmoil—it reminds us of the "flood of criticism" that was spoken of in Psalm 69—the cacophany of harmful words and of mockery and unrest—but God reaches down and draws the Psalmist out of the noisy pit and sets him on a rock—the imagery is of a cliff, an overlook—from the depths of a pit of noise, bogged down in the mire, to the heights of the cliffs where one can see clearly, and hear clearly
- And the noise of that pit is important because of the third thing that God does: verse 3: He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God
- God transforms the pit of noise into a song of praise—a NEW song—God doesn't simply RESTORE the OLD song—the song of orientation—those songs that we heard in Psalm 16 and Psalm 8—no this is a NEW song—a song of reorientation, a song that is sung by the one who has passed through a time of disorientation, the one who has seen the waters come up to their neck, whose steps have been bogged down in the mire, who has been trapped in the noisy pit—the one who has cried out to God, "save me, I am in danger, I am perishing, I am near death, where are you Lord?"
- This is a new song that is sung by one who has seen God bend down and draw them up and put their feet on a high place where the ground is firm and

the path is clear—but its also--as we will consider in just a little bit, a song to be sung by the one who looks forward in hope to the day of salvation, the one who says “thanks in advance”—but we’ll get to that

- God puts a new song in the Psalmist’s mouth, a song of praise.
- And now at the end of the first stanza, the Psalmist shifts from reporting what HAS happened, and tells us what WILL happen.
- Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Now that word for “fear” there, it doesn’t just mean folks will be scared of God like they’re scared of spiders or scared of heights—no, that word in the Hebrew is yare’ (yah-ray), and it does mean to fear but it also means to be in awe of, to have reverence for, to realise the power of, to understand one’s place when compared to the transcendant—it is what the Psalmist in Psalm 8 feels when looking up at the majesty of God in the heavens and asking what are humans that you are mindful of them?
- But why will many see and fear and put their trust in the Lord? Because of this psalm. Because of this testimony, because of the new song that God has put into the mouth of the psalmist. This song of praise and thanksgiving isn’t just for entertainment or for your information—it DOES something—it is efficacious—it is a catalyst that causes things to happen. When the Holy Spirit moves through these words, they have POWER, the power to change the way people think and act and believe.
- We’ll come back to this point—let’s look briefly at the next couple of stanzas.

- In the second stanza, beginning with verse 4, the Psalmist reminds us that happiness is to be found in trusting in the Lord, and not in those who go astray after false gods, and we hear an echo of Psalm 16 here—remember in Psalm 16 the Psalmist writes “Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings. . . I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.”
- And then the Psalmist here in Psalm 40, verse 5, addresses God directly and says basically, “this psalm is not just about ME, not just about MY salvation, My deliverance, because you, you O Lord my God, have multiplied your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us”—my story is just the tip of the iceberg, just one of multitudes of stories that could be told—in fact, the Psalmist says, “none can compare with you--Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.” This is the same sentiment that Nazarene pastor Frederick Lehman expressed through the words of the hymn that Pastor Tasha and her mother shared with us--
- The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell--O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
- What have we done to deserve it? How could we earn it? What payment is required?
- In stanza 3, the Psalmist answers those questions and tells us what is required by God in order to deserve God’s wondrous deeds of deliverance, in order to earn God’s infinite love, in order to find one’s name written down in the scroll of the book—the Psalmist tells us: Sacrifice and offering you do not

desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering, you have not required.

- What did the Psalmist have to offer in order for God to rescue them? Not a sacrifice, not an offering—but only for the Psalmist to cry out, “Save me. Deliver me.”
- This sounds familiar, doesn’t it? What did the Psalmist in Psalm 69 write, even in the midst of suffering and in a situation from which they cried out to be delivered? Did the Psalmist say, I’ll give God a burnt offering? I’ll give Him a sacrifice so he’ll save me? No, the Psalmist writes in verse 30 of Psalm 69,
  - I will praise the name of God with a song;
  - I will magnify him with a thanksgiving offering.
  - 31 This will please the Lord more than an ox
  - or a bull with horns and hoofs.
- There is no offering needed other than a cry for deliverance, no sacrifice required other than the sacrifice of praise—the Psalmist here in Psalm 40 tells us “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”— Within my heart, not based on external ritual, but in my heart--- Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but You, O Lord have given me an open ear—
- Now sometimes things in the Bible are ambiguous—they can mean more than one thing-- and here in verse 6, when the Psalmist writes “you have given me an open ear,” the Hebrew literally means “you have dug open ears for, or to, me” and so the phrase can be, and has been, translated to mean three different things: first, it can mean you have opened MY ears—

remember that the Psalmist was in the pit of noise, but now has ears to hear—secondly, it can mean that God has given HIS open ear TO the psalmist, that God has listened to what the Psalmist says, that he has heard the psalmist’s cry, as we are told in the very first verse of the psalm—or thirdly, it can mean that God has opened the ears of OTHER PEOPLE to hear what the Psalmist has to say—

- and, you know, some people like for words to mean one thing and one thing only, but let’s remember that the Psalms are poetry, and part of the beauty and power of poetry is that a single phrase can say three things at once—so you could say this is a trinitarian phrase—three meanings in one—because God HAS opened the ears of the Psalmist, and God HAS listened to his words, he’s heard his cry—and it is also true, as we see in the final stanza, that God has opened the ears of other people who would hear the psalmist’s words of praise.
- And that is what the final stanza is all about. The Psalmist declares:
  - I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;  
see, I have not restrained my lips as you know, O Lord.  
10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
  - I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;  
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from  
the great congregation.
- And this is why the Psalmist can say with assurance in the first stanza that many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord—because the Psalmist

shares the good news of God's salvation and deliverance— saying to the great congregation—and we're a part of that great congregation, through the ages—the Psalmist is saying "this is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour, all the day long"—The psalmist says this is what I have done, I have given my song, an offering offered not only to God but to others—I am giving them a song to sing—a song of thanksgiving, a song of praise, that they can sing even in the midst of the kind of suffering and despair that Psalm 69 speaks of, a song of thanksgiving that they can sing in hope and faith, looking forward to the great day of salvation--

- The Psalmist has not concealed God's faithfulness and steadfast love from the great congregation
- We heard this morning those powerful words from Frederick Lehman's hymn about the love of God
  - Could we with ink the ocean fill,
  - And were the skies of parchment made;
  - Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
  - And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
  - To write the love of God above
  - Would drain the ocean dry;
  - Nor could the scroll contain the whole
  - Tho' stretched from sky to sky.
- Pastor Lehman included those lines when he wrote that hymn in 1917, but he had first heard them when a preacher at a campmeeting around the turn of

the century quoted them—they had been found before that inscribed on the wall of a cell in what they then called an “insane asylum,” and long before that they had been written in a Jewish poem composed in Arabic in 1096 called Hadamut.

- And those words of thanksgiving and praise had travelled through a thousand years, from a synagogue in Germany to the desparate emptiness of a cell in a mental institution, to the pulpit of a Nazarene campmeeting, to the pen of Frederick Lehman, and here with us today.
- In the same way, the glad news of deliverance we find in Psalm 40 is not hidden, not restrained, but spoken, and propelled by the breath of the Spirit it travels through the great congregations of history, landing in the midst of the shadowy streets of Atlanta, GA in 1985, and here with us this morning
- When God puts a new song into the mouth of a psalmist, into OUR mouths, a song of praise and thanksgiving, and it is proclaimed, when it is not concealed from the great congregation—when we tell folks about it-- it DOES something—it is efficacious—it is a catalyst that causes things to happen. When the Holy Spirit moves through our words, they have POWER, the power to change the way people think and act and believe.
- Many will see and fear and put their trust in God.
- This morning some of us may feel like we’re still living back in Psalm 69—waiting to be delivered. Others of us may feel like we’re living in Psalm 40, full of praise and ready to proclaim the good news of God’s deliverance. I believe that the message of the Psalms for us today is this:

- in the midst of trials, sing a song of thanksgiving, sing a song of praise UNTIL deliverance happens, and then sing a song of thanksgiving BECAUSE deliverance HAS happened—this is why the Apostle Paul can say give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you—
- This morning the Psalmist has given us a song of thanksgiving to sing, even as we wait, patiently, even if we wonder how long to sing this song, even so, sing, sing a new song.
- Our good friends of LargsNaz, Brannon and Gloria Hancock are going to share with us now, may God bless the hearing of this song, and may the Holy Spirit minister to you this morning.