

After Darkness, Light The Light of Corporate Worship (October 29, 2017)

When you gather with the saints on the Lord's Day – what is it that you love about our time together?

I suspect there are probably many aspects of this time you love. The fellowship, the teaching, baptisms – but for most of us – one of the real highlights is our time of congregational singing. Where we unite our voices in full hearted, unrestrained praise of the Lord.

Now with that in mind, I want you to think what it would be like if the gathering of the church was silent. No united songs of praise. No joining our voices together in worship.

Even thinking about this during the week made me depressed – and yet there was a time – a long time – when the song of the church was silenced.

If you lived in Wittenberg in 1517 – attending church on Sunday was not something most people did regularly. But if you did attend the Castle Church on the Lord's Day – I sincerely doubt your soul would have been greatly edified.

You would make your way in and stood throughout without any participation.

The Priest would appear and go through the prescribed liturgy – all in Latin.

Prayers, Scripture readings and thanksgivings which you couldn't understand.

The centre of worship – would have been the Eucharist – the Lord's Table – where the Priest performed the miracle of the re-sacrifice of Christ by turning bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.

This would likely have been the most comprehensible part of the service for you.

And as for song – most likely there was no singing – and if there was – likely the only song would have been the chanting of monks in Latin.

However, fast forward a few years and the transformation of the gathered worship of that church was stunning.

Attendance at church was expected. The service was in the language the people spoke. Preaching the Word was now the centrepiece. But perhaps the most notable change would have been the re-introduction of congregational singing. Everyone singing from the heart to the Lord.

This morning we come to the third and final of our series celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

As we have seen, the reason the Reformation was such a searing light is that at its core:

The Reformation returned the focus of the church to the glory of God.

*Soli Deo Gloria – To The Glory Of God **Alone**.*

The church of the Middle Ages was in a very dark place – and what saved it was a restored focus on the glory of God – and the truths that led from it.

As the Reformation developed and matured these truths became known as the **5 Solas**.

Or in English – the **5 Alones**.

To the Glory Of God **Alone**.

By Grace **Alone** – Through Faith **Alone** – In Christ **Alone** – Based On Scripture **Alone**.

Foundational, unalterable, unshakeable truths that must never again be allowed to be suppressed.

As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation approaches, I have chosen to look at *three* crucial areas the Reformation recovered and transformed – areas that foundationally impact us to this day.

Reformation legacies entrusted to us to guard for the generations to come.

Those areas are:

The Gospel
The Word
Corporate Worship

This morning we are going to look at the *third* crucial area:

Corporate Worship

Let me make a comment or two to set up our discussion.

Worship is not just our time of singing to the Lord.

Everything we do 24/7 is worship. The way we live our lives at home and work and with our neighbours is worship.

How you act as you drive to work is worship.

How you choose to spend your lunch hour is worship.

What you do in the evenings is worship.

Romans 12:1:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

But this morning, I want to narrow our focus from all of life as worship – to Corporate Worship – the gathered worship of the church.

And then I want to narrow our discussion even further.

I know full well that everything we do on in our Sunday Service is worship – prayer, the Lord’s Table, Baptisms, Scripture Reading, Preaching, Fellowship.

They all deserve their own sermon. But because I have limited time, I have chosen to focus on one aspect of our corporate worship and how it was affected by the Reformation. And that aspect is **congregational singing**.

The saints joining in song to the praise of God.

Here is my point for this morning:

The Reformation restored the song of the church to its rightful place of joyful praise.

I thank God for the truths of the Reformation and for the focus on the Word of God – but wow – I am so thankful it returned song to the gathered church.

This morning, I really don’t want to get controversial. If anything sounds controversial – it is not by design.

I do not plan on touching subjects such as hymns versus contemporary music or Psalms only or acapella only or any of the worship wars we often get bogged in.

Basically, I want you to think of what you would lack if you lost the privilege of congregational singing. I want you to focus on the joy it is to sing together – and then to thank God that the Reformers restored this jewel to our lives.

To do this, I want to talk about congregational singing in three areas.

Singing flows from salvation

Singing imbeds great truths

Singing unites the church

First:

Singing flows from salvation

I have philosophy of singing that is pretty basic – if you are saved – you sing.

Psalm 66:1– 3:

Shout for joy to God, all the earth; **sing** the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds!

Unless you have a medical issue and are truly mute – there should be no silent Christians in any worship service.

A joyless, songless Christian is an oxymoron – it just shouldn't exist.

I trust you know that when this world was created – there was singing.

Job 38:7 tells us that when God created the heavens and the earth – the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.

In heaven right now there is constant singing. John had a vision of heaven in Revelation 5:9– 10:

And they sang a new song [the song of salvation], saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

I did you the favour of not singing that – but praise God when I get to heaven I'll sing it for the Lamb is worthy.

Later in Revelation 15 we are told that even after this world ceases to exist – after it is rolled up as a scroll – there will be songs of praise to the Lord echoing throughout all eternity.

The Redeemed servants of God are called to sing.

If you love the Lord – you just have to sing.

Psalm 98:4:

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

Creation itself sings – and the Redeemed sing!

Song fills the pages of the Bible.

In times of joy *and* times of sorrow.

Every victory was remembered in song. Every lament was expressed in song.

Paul and Barnabas were clapped in irons and thrown in prison in Philippi – but all it did was cause them to sing praises to the Lord.

When the church gathers, one of the things we are to do is sing. Colossians 3:16:

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.

Yet despite all of these unmistakable calls for the church to be a people of song – there was a time when the song of the church was silenced.

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church began to emphasise worship as something done by the priests – not the people. The priests would worship on behalf of the people.

The centre of worship became the mass – a sacred drama depicting the re-sacrifice of Christ enacted by the clergy with the congregation as an audience.

They stated that the people did not even have to be present to receive the benefit of the mass and worship because the priests conducted the service on behalf of the people.

So if you don't have to be there – guess what? – the people stopped coming.

The end result was empty churches and a hierarchical structure in which certain elements of worship became the means in and of themselves of conveying grace.

Singing became very secondary and peripheral.

And if there was to be singing, the church decreed that like other aspects of worship – it belonged exclusively to the priestly office.

This does not mean there was never any song in the services of the Middle Ages.

But it seems that it was not common – and if there was song it came exclusively from the priests and monks – not the congregation.

And it is fair to say that the idea of a Catholic worship band was **not** what you should have in your mind.

The usual fare was Benedictine monks chanting in Latin.

All this is not to say that the Catholic Church produced no hymns and songs of note. It did.

Some of their hymns we still use today: Theodulph of Orleans (ca. 750-821), "All Glory, Laud, and Honour"; Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee"; and "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"; and an anonymous twelfth-century writer, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Great hymns – but it seems these were rarely sung – were not widely known – and when they were they were sung it was in Latin – by the Priests – which meant the congregation could not understand what was being sung – so they were doomed to passive silence.

How tragic! They might as well have cut out their tongues before attending church.

Luther was not the first Reformer to realise we were created to sing and the silent churches had left a gaping hole in the worship of the saints.

But in the Middle Ages, any attempt at bringing song to the congregation was clamped down on and hard.

One example was Jan Huss, the early Czech Reformer.

He was condemned as a heretic and sentenced to be martyred by the Council of Constance in 1415. One of the reasons given for why he must die was that he held to the "heresy of congregational singing."

Huss loved to sing. As the flames that would kill him leapt toward him, he began singing, "Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me." He died with song on his lips.

This infuriated the authorities, so in case anyone else should think singing was something anyone could do, the Council of Constance sent a solemn warning to Jacob of Misi, Huss' successor as leader of the Czech Church, commanding him to cease the practice of singing hymns in the churches. It decreed: "If laymen are forbidden to preach and interpret the Scriptures, much more are they forbidden to sing publicly in the churches."

It is hard for us today to comprehend that men and women died because they believed the church should sing – but such was the darkness the church had descended into.

When the Reformation in Germany got underway one of the first areas Luther got to work on was congregational singing.

Luther was not just visionary, inspiring leader and gifted scholar – again in the providence of God he was a tremendous musician with a passion for singing.

From a boy, it was noted that he had a gifted singing voice.

He also was accomplished on the flute and the lute.

When he sang – he accompanied himself on the lute.

And he loved to sing. John Walther, a contemporary composer who worked with Luther wrote this:

“It is to my certain knowledge that that holy man of God, Luther, prophet and apostle to the German nation, took great delight in music, I spent many a delightful hour with him in singing; and oftentimes I have seen the dear man wax so happy and merry in heart over his singing that it is well-near impossible to weary or content him otherwise.”

Luther himself said this:

“I would see all the arts, and music, in particular, used in the service of Him who has given and created them.”

Luther saw music as a gift to the church by which we respond in praise to the Lord for who He is and what He has done.

He wrote:

“Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. It drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity, sycophancy, and other vices. ... The devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God.”

When the Reformation began, one of Luther’s first tasks was to attempt to take the great Latin hymns of the church and translate them into German. However, he found most had problems. They had too much Catholic teaching, too much worship of Mary and since they were written for priests not people – there was often little to inspire the joy of the common man.

So there were only some hymns he could use and they had to be adapted and rewritten. He also wanted new hymns.

He lamented:

“We lack German poets and musicians, or they are unknown to us, who are able to make Christian and spiritual songs of such value that they can be used daily in the house of God.”

But Luther persevered and in 1524 the first Protestant hymnal was published. It contained only eight hymns, four were by Luther, three by Speratus, and one probably by Justus Jonas.

The response was incredible. The little hymn-books flew all over Germany and then throughout Europe. Luther’s enemies lamented that “the whole people are singing themselves into his doctrines.”

It was like rain on a parched land. Souls sprung to life.

Song resonated in the hearts of the saints.

So great was the demand for hymns that a second volume known as the “Erfurt Enchiridion” was published later the same year. This contained twenty-five hymns, eighteen of which were Luther’s.

The Reformers later said of this time, “The nightingale of Wittenberg” had begun to sing.

Luther wrote many hymns. Thirty-seven survive but none has achieved such fame as “A mighty fortress is our God.” Luther also composed the chorale to which it is still sung.

That hymn has been translated into practically every language and is regarded as one of the noblest and best examples of Christian hymnody. Not only did it become the battle hymn of the Reformation, but many regard it as the true national hymn of Germany.

Inspired by Luther – the Reformers in every part of the Europe began to seek gifted lyricists and musicians to compose the songs of the Reformation. Some of the greatest songs of the church came out of this period.

All People That On Earth Do Dwell
All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above
O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord
Praise to the Lord, Almighty, the King of Creation
The Lord’s My Shepherd
Whate’er My God Ordains is Right
Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of All Nature

The list is long.

Luther and the Reformers understood – when our hearts are transformed and renewed – we just have to sing. We just have to praise God.

We are so thankful for salvation, the forgiveness of sins, the privilege of knowing God – that we just have to sing or we would burst.

Psalm 63:1– 5:

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips **will** praise you. So I **will** bless you as long as I live; in your name I **will** lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth **will** praise you with joyful lips.

Corporate worship changed from a time of watching the professionals do their thing – to a time where all the redeemed of God responded to the wonder of salvation with everything inside us.

That kind of singing is a foretaste of heaven.

Song spread the Reformation as much if not more than theology did.

“What is the chief end of man?” asks the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The answer: “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

To praise the Lord is the original desire sewn into every fibre of our redeemed humanity. When we have to sing God’s praise, we have to join with the song of angels.

How can the church not sing?

My *second* point:

Singing imbeds great truths

Martin Luther believed that more people were won to Christ through singing the songs of faith even than through his preaching.

That is probably true.

I suspect that far more Christians could recite the words to hymns and songs than they can recite memory verses. In fact I think it is a rare Christian who is the exception.

I won’t ask for a show of hands. But, If you doubt that – turn up to the bonfire on church camp. No hymn books, no data-projector – but you all know those hymns and you sing them. They are in your hearts and souls.

Over the years several parents with special needs children have told me their child couldn’t tell you the gospel – but they can sure sing the truths of the Word – off key, out of tune – but with real passion.

I suspect more of your children learned the truths of the gospel from singing songs – than from being taught Bible truths.

I suspect more Australian Christian kids learned more Scripture from Colin songs than anything else.

Luther understood this.

It was a later Reformer, Fletcher of Saltoun who said, “Let me write a nation’s ballads, and I care not who writes the nation’s laws,” but the words could just as easily have been Luther’s.

What Luther did say was this:

Next to theology I give to music the highest place and honour. Music is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.

He also insisted that every pastor ordained to serve in the Lutheran church be fully trained in all aspects of music.

Being musically challenged, I doubt I would have made the cut as a pastor in Luther's day.

Nevertheless, I am sure he was on the right track. Listen again to Colossians 3:16:

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.

We teach and admonish one another through singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Now before I get an inbox of emails – let me be clear on this.

This doesn't mean we sing anything. Part of my job and the Elder's job is to make sure we sing songs that actually teach the deep spiritual truths – that reflect the Scriptures in all their glory.

Some hymns and songs are just inane.

All God's people say Amen
All God's people say Amen
All God's people say Amen, A-men

How do you feel? "I feel great!"
When we gather with your saints
How do you feel? "I feel great!" A-men.

No thank you.

Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Oh Yeah.

In a couple of lines we have the most succinct understanding of the Trinity I know.

Luther believed that most people in the church were theological barbarians – I would have put it more delicately.

But he insisted that one of the best ways to ingrain the truths of the faith was through song.

He insisted that the Lutheran churches meet every Thursday evening and spend the entire time in congregational hymn singing to teach them the great truths of the faith.

He is right – you can teach deep theology through learning the songs of the church.

Many of Luther's enemies feared his hymns more than the man himself.

Pick a doctrine, a teaching, a truth – and there is a hymn – a song that will teach it and sheet it home to our souls.

Creation, election, incarnation, redemption, grace, faith, heaven – there is not one doctrine we do not teach and celebrate in song.

There are songs for every part of the Christian life. When you are struggling, when you are joyful, when you are overwhelmed by your sin.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
Telling of evil yet within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

I have arrived at Sundays feeling depressed and wanting to be anywhere else – but I am a pastor so I had to come. Then I hear those songs that tell me – yes my sin is great but Jesus' grace and forgiveness is greater – and the clouds part and the sun shines again.

And it is not just older hymns – the better modern ones are awesome in how they teach truth. In fact, there are some areas they seem to touch that were somewhat lacking in older hymns.

In Christ Alone deals with the fact that Christ's death satisfied the wrath of God – and that is hard to find taught in earlier hymns.

'Till on the cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

While many older hymns do touch on growing older and dying – few do it as well as *10,000 Reasons*.

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

When we have words that reflect truth, music that matches the words and prepared hearts – then the people of God just sing these great doctrines and promises and truths as a reflection of the joy of our salvation.

I can always tell if a sermon has hit home when we get to the closing song – because you just want to stand and sing.

Luther said it well:

Let God speak directly to His people through the Scriptures, and let His people respond with grateful songs of praise.

The Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that edify are those that take the truths of the Bible – and put them in a way that is easy to grasp, memorable and singable.

Sing them enough and the truths of the Reformation, the glory of the gospel, the wonder of salvation – are imbedded in your heart.

I am telling you – on that day when your strength is failing – you won't say – would you turn on *The Bachelorette*.

What you will want to hear is the Word read and the great songs of faith sung.

It took seven years into the Reformation to get 8 hymns. 500 years later we have a treasury of songs old and new to inspire, to inform and to encourage.

What a blessing! What a heritage!

Now we come to our *third* and final point:

Singing unites the church

If you have been a Christian for any length of time – we accept it as normal that we gather to sing.

But, for most people they think that is weird – really weird!

Normal people listen to music – they don't gather to make it.

If we happen to be musical we produce music as a performance – not come as part of a large group who vary from musically talented to tone deaf – and sing.

Most people don't sing much – maybe a bit in the car or the shower when no one is around.

And gathered singing – it is rare.

Maybe singing Happy Birthday, or the national anthem at a footy game.

And gathered singing with true passion – really rare.

Maybe school war cries – or if we can bend the rules a bit and say – QUEENSLANDER! – is a song – then we sing at State of Origin.

But large numbers of adults regularly gathering to sing a variety of songs that move them to the core of their being – the church is about the only group that does this.

There are very few things that unites the average Aussie with enough passion to sing from the heart with joy and abandon.

If Dena and I passed out an invitation to our neighbours inviting them – to a passionate sing-along – to the glory of Australia – most are going to wonder what is wrong with us.

Who are these people I live near?

It would probably be a pretty disappointing turnout.

We are Australians – we don't do that stuff – that's for Polynesians at the haka – or Liverpool supporters at the footy.

Group singing – that is plain weird.

No it is not!

We cannot help but praise what we love and believe in.

When I first became a Christian, I found everything about church to be strange – but especially the singing. The passion – the heart – the fact that people who can't sing – don't care they can't sing and they sing anyway – and expect me to sing. I found that bizarre.

But now I rejoice – because the point is worship – not performance. We praise what we love.

One of the things we will do throughout eternity is sing with people from every tribe and tongue and nation – united by one thing – a love for Christ.

Congregational singing is a foretaste of eternity. We sing shoulder to shoulder with the redeemed – praising Christ.

We are a people who are really different. Nerds and jocks. Introverts and extroverts. Indians and Koreans. People with messed up lives and pretty sorted lives. Young and old. Professionals and homemakers.

I know full well I am an acquired taste – but so are you. Without Christ we wouldn't ever have anything to do with each other – let alone sing together. But because of Christ we are united in a love and fellowship that death cannot break – so we sing.

The greatest signs of our unity are the Table of the Lord and the song of praise to the Lamb that connects our hearts.

Now don't get big-headed on me when I tell you this – but one of the things I love about our church is our singing. I thank God regularly for our musicians – but even more for each of you.

Too many times I visit other churches – now many sing great – but all too often I find there are a lot of churches who don't sing – and I am thinking – what is wrong with you people? – I miss *Grace*!

Do you know that one of the real privileges of being a pastor in this church is to stand up here in the closing song?

You have heard the Word opened – you have heard about Jesus who forgave your impossible mountain of sin – you know that after this world there is heaven – you know trusting Christ means He has born your sin and given you His righteousness – and you still can't believe that God can love you that much – but by the end of the sermon you know it is true.

So we pray and we stand to sing. And you sing.

No one cares if their hands are up or down – if their pitch is perfect or not – You just want to thank the Lord.

You just want to join with your brothers and sisters and sing the new song, the song of redemption, the song of the Lamb:

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9– 10.

Confession time. When I graduated from seminary – I was a song snob.

Hard to believe I know – but very true.

It had been impressed on me that Sunday is the time to give the Lord our absolute best.

We wear our Sunday best – suit and tie.

We give our best – as much as we can.

We preach the best – expository preaching.

We sing the best.

And here is what that meant.

In the last 500 years – the church has been gifted with literally hundreds of thousands of decent hymns.

Of those maybe 400-700 are excellent – the cream of the crop. For every – How Great Thou Art – there are thousands that don't make the grade.

Over the years, the great ones have been meticulously paired with the best classic compositions we have.

So that is what we should sing.

We don't sing the modern stuff because it doesn't have the same theological, lyrical and musical depth – we only sing the best.

So for awhile – I didn't sing if the song was not up to standard.

I have long since repented of my musical, theological and fellowship folly.

Many of the modern hymns are every bit as good as the older ones.

More than that, I think the modern ones speak to our generation in a way that often the older ones don't.

So I want to say – we need both.

But even more – by not singing – I was robbing God of my worship, my brethren of uniting my voice with theirs and myself of one of the great privileges of this life – worshipping the Lord with the saints.

I know there are reasons not to sing a song, such as if the theology is wrong.

But come on – that is rarely the case.

More often people choose not to sing because they don't like the song or the music or the instrument or something else.

The way I figure it is this. In heaven – no one will complain and say – Heavenly Father – seriously – I can't believe we have drums in heaven – and if you ask me – the words are not quite right – and the music is a bit fast tempo – so if it is all the same – I won't sing.

No! We will be lost in adoration of the Lamb.

That should be the same here.

If we sing a song that is not your favourite – too bad.

The point is not your preference or mine. The point is to worship God with your fellow undeserving brothers and sisters.

We should be singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *with thankfulness in our hearts to God.*

Do not rob yourself of this privilege.

Do not rob the church of your voice and your heart.

Do not rob the Lord of your praise.

In 1761, John Wesley felt the need to publish his *Directions for Singing* for the Wesleyan Church. Maybe I should publish mine.

Wesley had seven of them.

Let me point out a couple that we need reminding of in every age:

3. **Sing all.** See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.

Everyone sing – don't make excuses – just sing.

4. **Sing lustily and with a good courage.** Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.

Sing it out – you are praising the Lord. Don't sing the songs of the world with more passion than the songs of Zion. No phoning it in – just sing.

7. **Above all sing spiritually.** Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. ... so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Sing in such a way as we please Him – and this is part of your acceptable service of worship – just sing.

Keith and Kristyn Getty in their great little book *Sing!* – say this:

When we sing, it is a battle cry of hope for the wounded, for the weary, for the lost. ... When we sing, we witness to the people in our church who are yet to believe—to the unsaved spouse, the cynical teen, the intrigued friend. We witness to the outsider stepping through the door of a church and even, through the sound we make, to the outsider walking past the door of a church. The sight and sound of a congregation singing praise to God together is a radical witness in a culture that rejects God and embraces individualism. Our songs are the public manifesto of what we believe.

Men and women like Jan Huss died to bring song back to the church.

The nightingale of Wittenberg – Luther restored the glory of congregational singing to the church.

It is one of the highlights of my week and one of the great privileges of my life – that someone like me who cannot hold a note to save his life – gets to sing for all he is worth – with you – and no one cares I can't sing because all anyone is thinking is – how great our God is.

What a privilege to sing!

After Darkness, Light

The Light of Corporate Worship

(October 29, 2017)

Main Point: The Reformation restored the song of the church to its rightful place of joyful praise.

Please pick a few relevant questions from each section and ensure the majority of the time is focussed on application.

General Questions:

1. What is worship? What is congregational worship?
2. What aspects of our congregational worship do you enjoy the most?
3. Do you agree that Christians are called to be a people of song?
4. Why do songs speak to us in ways that reading and preaching don't?
5. Why are songs such a powerful way to teach truth?
6. What should be the criteria for the songs we sing in church?
7. Why is congregational singing such a statement of unity?
8. Discuss this quote from Keith and Kristyn Getty in their great little book *Sing!*:

When we sing, it is a battle cry of hope for the wounded, for the weary, for the lost. ... When we sing, we witness to the people in our church who are yet to believe—to the unsaved spouse, the cynical teen, the intrigued friend. We witness to the outsider stepping through the door of a church and even, through the sound we make, to the outsider walking past the door of a church. The sight and sound of a congregation singing praise to God together is a radical witness in a culture that rejects God and embraces individualism. Our songs are the public manifesto of what we believe.

9. What are your favourite hymns and songs – why?

Application Questions:

1. How do you find our worship at Grace?
2. How would you change our worship?
3. Are there times you don't sing or only sing half-heartedly? Why?

4. Where should preference sit in deciding how enthusiastically you join in congregational singing?
5. Are you looking forward to the worship of heaven? Why or why not?