

Carol-Sing Reflection (27Dec2020)  
Lk2:22-40; Ps148

*They'd sing! And they'd sing! And they'd SING!  
SING! SING! SING! And the more the Grinch  
thought of this Who ChristmasSing, The more the  
Grinch thought, "I must stop this whole thing!"*

I already got to reference the Grinch on Christmas Day, but he fits today, too. I'd say what makes the Grinch particularly Grinchy is that he doesn't like or want the ChristmasSing, while these are songs and hymns and carols that we mostly know and love and cherish.

I was reflecting outdoor Christmas Day worship as probably the only time it would work to sing together without any accompaniment to assist. These are familiar and dear songs we know very much by heart. That's some point for our own ChristmasSing today, whether the Grinch likes it or not.

Now, some of you can more quickly get quite enough singing. Others can never have too much, in worship or otherwise: in the car or while doing dishes or with commercials on TV or who knows what. This year may be more missing out on it—besides no congregational singing, also not having concerts and no Take Me Out to the Ballgame or alma mater-hailing Varsity amid crowds. Maybe extra gatherings around fires have pulled out a few guitars for old folk songs. I don't know.

Anyway, today there's quite a bit of music, though I didn't even get in all the requests. I know it's not the same, as we're not gathered, and may be harder to feel festive and part of the chorus at home, and I have no idea whether you're joining in heartily or just listening. I hope it hasn't gotten to a Grinchy point where you think it's just sing! Sing! Sing! Sing! and that you must stop this whole thing!

But I rush on to point out that it's not just our ability, our song, our voices, our feelings about all of this. We are certainly invited to join in the chorus, to add our harmonies and own pitches, but this is a much bigger unstoppable song.

I like that we happen to have today a reading with the song of Simeon. On a day with lots of singing, even the Bible tells of singing, maybe with an old man's wobbly warbly voice offering a

lullaby to the infant in his arms and the God known in that baby Jesus.

I like it also because Simeon's song reverberates, repeats, echoes onward. It's a song we'll sing at the end today and is standard repertoire for communion services at our dismissal and parting from each other. It's also prescribed for night prayers at the close of the day, the Gospel canticle that fits that moment, of time passed and the day fulfilled as we go to sleep and on to next things.

For marking transitions, as Simeon sang of his life fulfilled and able to end, I'd say we really miss such songs right now. It is a sad deprivation that we can't gather and sing for Jean Loichinger's life, in praise of the God who gave her to us to know and to love, to sing of that servant dismissed in peace, seeing the salvation prepared for her.

But, again, this isn't just our song, our voices, our limited abilities in this time. It's not only up to us, because the song resounds and reverberates more. We, of course, have been singing with angels recently, the *gloria in excelsis* and glory to God in the highest Christmas birth song that is also part of our ordinary worship routine. Echoing the angels gives our song supernatural connection, transcending even out of our realm of existence. Maybe that speaks to the sublime power of music to transport us, to lift us.

But let's not set our sights so otherworldly that we miss out on what's here. We started by singing that love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies and all heaven has come to proclaim it ("Love Has Come," ELW 292). That's not just angels, but also a star and dark skies to join in the song, the music of the spheres. We went on to sing of flowers and trees who also proclaim ("Cold December Flies Away," ELW 299 and "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" ELW 272).

I'm grateful for such reminders. We may observe singing ability of birds, or whales and cicadas sounding musical to each other. But it's so much more, as our Psalm reminds us. This Psalm, indeed, has the stars and the whales of the deep and the singing birds and chirping creeping insects, also the lowing cattle ("Away in a Manger," ELW 277) and the hills that are alive with the sound of music, the snows and all humans, of all ages and

abilities. We join the hymn of all creation, absolutely no tryouts required!

I hope that harks back to the nature of song, namely that it's natural. And it's unstoppable not just because everyone has a part, but because it's who we are. It happens in joy. It happens in sorrow. We come up with this notion that we're *supposed* to praise God, as if it was demanded, and make it into a chore to be done—or resisted and think we must stop the whole thing.

But when it includes fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains (“Joy to the World,” ELW 267), evermore and evermore (“Of the Father’s Love Begotten,” ELW 295), then we have a good indicator that by existing our lives sing, each with our own part from God. It’s simply and naturally how and who we are. Even when we can’t hear our congregational voices together, still we can know that we are in harmony, in tune, resonating along with all creation.

Since that is how creation exists—solo and in chorus with each other—it’s exactly perfect that we have so many beloved songs of Christmas, this occasion when our God fully came to join us in this world, to take part and live into the song.