

Advent- Mid-Wk.  
12-3-14  
Psalm 96:9-13

## “Big God”

One of the best ways to teach our children about God is through singing. Do you remember the little song, “My God is so Big?” If you don’t, it goes like this:

My God is so Big,  
So strong and so mighty,  
There’s nothing my God can not do.

The mountains are His,  
The rivers are His,  
The stars are His handiwork too.

My God is so Big,  
So strong and so mighty,  
There’s nothing my God can not do — for you!

As simple as these lyrics are, they are quite descriptive aren't they? Our God is so big! There’s nothing our God can’t do. The mountains are his, the rivers are his, the stars are his handiwork. We teach our children to think of God this way and rightly so! But what about us? Most of us aren't children anymore but is our God still big? Or is he just in the background put away in a nice little box that is safe and manageable? We know he’s there and we will call on him during certain times of life but he is not to get in the way of who we want to be and how we

want to live. The truth is we might teach our kids that our God is so big but so much of the time we live as though he is actually so small.

But he's not small. In fact, the truth is our God is so much bigger, so much larger than what we realize. We think we're so smart that we can somehow figure out all there is to know about life. But we can't. God is the Almighty. He is the Creator of all who with his words spoke everything into motion. His ways are beyond our understanding. He most certainly is a big God. And a big God needs big praise.

Psalm 96 is calling us to sing big praises to this creator of all. "Sing a new song . . . Sing to the Lord . . . Proclaim his salvation and glory day after day." And not just us, but all of creation is to rejoice and be glad. The heavens, earth and sea; the mountains, fields and trees. All sing praises because the Lord reigns- he is in control. And his salvation is for all of creation. This Psalm is like the grown-up version of "My God is so big!" And how appropriate, I think, for this time of Advent preparation. After all, this is the great season of hope and anticipation. Christ was born. That we know. He lived on this earth and died on this earth. He rose and ascended into heaven where he comes to us in his word and sacraments offering his grace. And he will come again in power and glory to complete our salvation and save not just his people but all of creation ruined by sin. That's the great hope of all of creation. To echo the words of the psalmist, "let the earth rejoice! Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let all of the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Now you may be wondering, how does a tree praise the Lord? That's a small way of thinking in light of our big God. Praise is more than just what we do by

singing a few words during a worship service. Praise is also the sounds and sights of being and doing just what God created a tree or a mountain or a bird to be and do. This is an important in our comprehensive understanding of just how big our God is.

Imagine for a moment some of your most memorable scenes of God's creation. My family just spent Thanksgiving weekend visiting my parents in Western North Carolina. As we drove up that steep stretch of Hwy. 421 from N. Wilksboro towards Watauga County the temperature dropped 7 degrees in a matter of minutes. As we slowly gained elevation and finally crossed the Eastern Continental Divide, the incredible majesty of the snow-covered Blue Ridge Mountains came into full view. Amazing.

Perhaps you've experienced such memorable scenes. A sunset at the beach; the wonder of the oceans seen through the glass of a scuba mask; the colors of the blooming Rocky Mountain wildflowers; or maybe even the complexity of looking at something like a leaf or a bug or even a skin cell under a microscope.

These and many other things that we have never seen are what our big God sees all the time from every possible point of view. A Christian author named Dallas Willard wrote that God is most joyous being in the universe. He says that we pay money to get a tank with a few tropical fish and enjoy looking at their beauty as they swim around. But God has oceans and seas of fish which he constantly enjoys. Mr. Willard says, "All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul-exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breath and depth and richness." (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* [HarperOne, 1998], 62-64.)

Creation praises God by being and doing what he created it to be and do. The sound of a one-year old laughing when her father tickles her arm. The squirrels in the backyard scurrying about collecting nuts for the winter; the birds singing in the early morning; the water running down a mountainside as the snow melts. All of these are music to God's ears and beautiful in his eyes.

Of course, not all is good. Many of these sights and sounds are too often silenced and turned into something ugly aren't they? So many animals cower in fear and try to make no sounds at all. They don't want to be seen or heard or they'll be attacked and eaten. Fires rage through drought stricken forests; hurricanes and tornadoes destroy and once majestic trees don't sing at all.

And yet Psalm 96 call us to praise the Lord and rejoice. Let's not miss this. We can praise and sing, because not only is God so big but so is his salvation.

Our Gospel reading from John in just a few words puts all of the hope and anticipation of his salvation into the proper perspective. "He, Jesus Christ, was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." God came into this world as a baby boy so that we would know him.

That's a big God!

And now that we know him and believe in him, we along with all of creation hope for the day we will be "set free," as Paul says in his letter to the Romans, from its bondage to corruption and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God when he returns. That's big salvation!

You see, I think we have this tendency to make his salvation too small. We talk of spiritual life after death but kind of stop there as if we are to spend eternity as spiritual beings floating on clouds. Yes, heaven is being with Jesus. Yes, it is being reunited with loved ones. But his salvation is even bigger. Our great hope is the resurrection of the body reunited with the soul living once again as the physical creatures God created us to be in the new creation.

And this redemption of all of creation begins with Jesus. What happened to his body, now alive and glorified is the hope of not just you and me and all believers; it is the hope of all creation. All the earth and sea and heavens, all the trees and mountains, look forward to this big salvation Jesus will bring when he returns.

A popular piece of music around this time of year is Handel's Messiah, especially the Hallelujah Chorus. But this is not just a Christmas piece. In fact, just a few weeks ago it was played right here as the postlude at one of our beloved member's funeral. And how fitting that was because it paints for us such a vivid picture of our big God and his big salvation. Listen to the words:

Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, Hallelujah!

The Kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah!

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah!

Now imagine the birds are singing along with the sopranos. The cows are mooing the bass line. Elephants trumpet out in joyous adoration. The trees are swaying in harmony to the music. The mountains have never stood more majestic. Deer run and leap without fear. Everything works the way it was

created to be and sings in praise because the resurrected Savior has returned as Lord of Lord and King of Kings, and he shall reign forever and forever. <sup>1</sup>

Now that's our God who is bigger than we can imagine. It's the sound of praise we can look forward to, but it's also the sound of praise you and I are already singing as those redeemed in Christ. As the Psalmist writes, "May we sing to him, bless his name and tell of his salvation everyday." Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Beautiful Savior, King of Creation; Concordia Seminary Press; Pg. 4, "Praising God's Salvation-Glenn Nielsen