



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 13, 2020

Sing a Song!

by Garland F. Pierce

Exodus 14:19-31; Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21

14:19 The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them.

14:20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

14:21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

14:22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.

14:28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

14:29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

14:30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

14:31 Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

15:20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.

15:21 And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

James Weldon Johnson, having been asked to speak at a school in Jacksonville, FL, USA for a celebration of US President Abraham Lincoln's birthday, penned a poem rather than a speech. He then asked his brother, J. Rosamund Johnson, to set the words to music. The result would be sung by school children and many others for generations to follow and become affectionately called the "Negro National Anthem" or "Black National Anthem." The three stanzas move from praise to lament and then to prayer. The song tells of oppression and ultimately of faith in a God willing and able to faithfully accompany and liberate.

In the 14th and 15th chapters of Exodus, one sees God acting on behalf of the Israelites as their Egyptian oppressors are in hot pursuit of them in an attempt to take them back into bondage. The Israelites find themselves in the impossible situation of danger in front and behind them, facing the Red Sea and running from the Egyptians. God makes a way, leading them to freedom. And when their muddy feet stand on freedom's shore, they sing. They sing *to* their God. They sing *of* their God. The prophet Miriam leads them in song and dance. The Israelites sing because they are free. They sing like they are free—full-throated and with full body.

An old preacher once said, "You cannot understand fully somebody's praise if you don't know their journey." Some may ask how can the Israelites celebrate God's destruction of the Egyptians and claim to not understand such a joyful reaction. We might not be able to fully understand the Israelites' celebration of the Egyptians' demise. We understand even less how God parted the Red Sea and made a way to freedom. We may not even fully understand all the mixed emotions that may be associated with our own liberation or just how God parted the sea and made a way for us; but, if we believe that God can do it, has done it, and will do it again for us individually and collectively, then we have reason to sing and dance.

This meditation ends in an almost identical fashion as the one which preceded it. Like the Israelites, we are called to remember our deliverance and celebrate it. No vaccine as of yet, Black Lives still do not matter to all; but God sees the suffering and is acting even now, making a way. Do you see it? How will you share the good news when it happens? What will you do to tell the generations to come? How will you ensure that we never forget that our God is the God of Justice and Love for all, our God is faithful to save and deliver? How will you celebrate God? Try singing a song! *Sing a song, full of the faith that the dark past has taught us. Sing a song, full of the hope that the present has brought us. Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won.*

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)— Revisit the questions above. How will you ensure that we never forget that our God is the God of Justice and Love for all, our God is faithful to save and deliver? What song will you sing that will help you remember?

PRAY:

Almighty God, you have saved your people throughout the ages and protected them in ways which can never be fully understood. Give us the courage to face issues of good and evil within our world with the strength and courage only You can give, and so contribute

to Your work for love, justice, and peace in the world. We declare that we shall sing your praise for your mighty acts and faithful deeds to us. AMEN

Adapted from: <http://www.netdevotions.org/BExodus%2015,1-12.pdf>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, start to think through and make a plan as to how you will help those who shall come behind us understand what it was like to live through these tumultuous times of 2020. *Write, share, or sing a song!* For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration, voting, completing the 2020 census (**CENSUS DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**) and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org> and <https://2020census.gov>.) For everyone, practice social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Lift Every Voice and Sing
AMEC Hymnal, #571

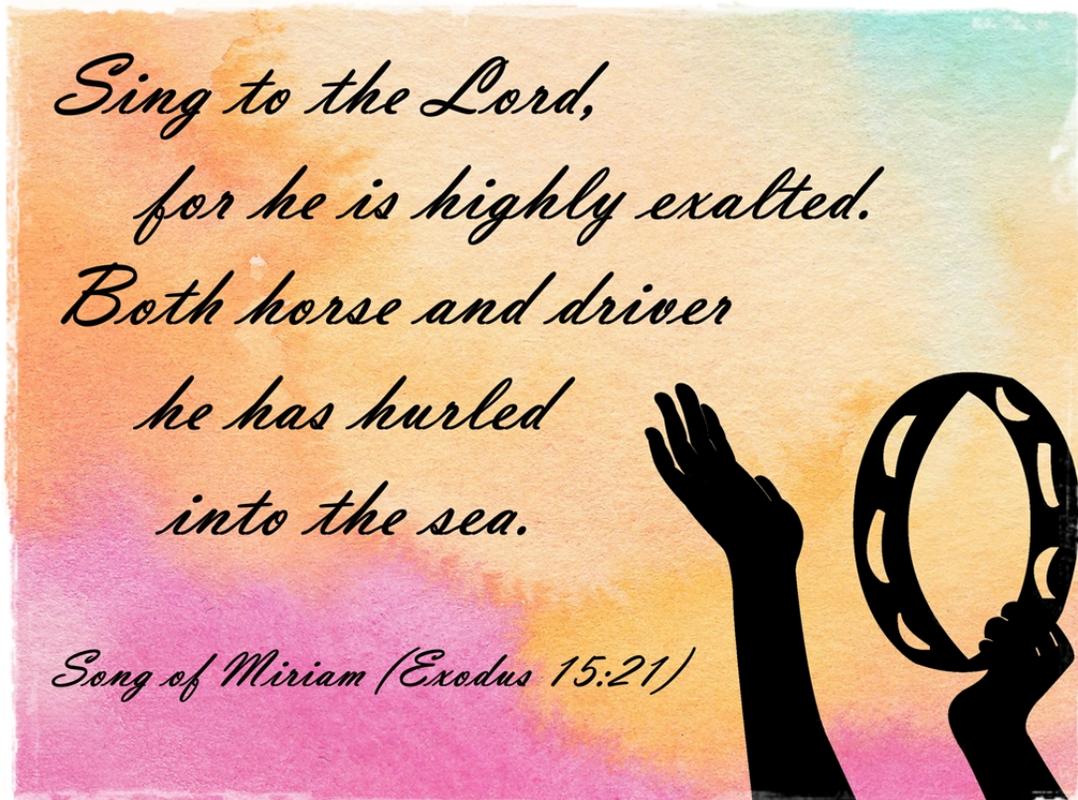
1. Lift ev-ery voice and sing,
Till earth and heav-en ring,
Ring with the har-mo-nies of lib-er-ty;
Let our re-joic-ing rise
High as the lis-tening skies,
Let it re-sound loud as the roll-ing sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the pre-sent has brought us;
Fac-ing the ris-ing sun Of our new day be-gun,
Let us march on till vic-to-ry is won.
2. Ston-y the road we trod,
Bit-ter the chas-tening rod,
Felt in the days when hope un-born had died;
Yet with a stead-y beat,
Have not our wear-y feet
Come to the place for which our fa-thers sighed?
We have come o-ver a way that with tears has been wa-tered,
We have come, tread-ing our path through the blood of the slaugh-tered;
Out from the gloom-y past, Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
3. God of our wea-ry years,

God of our si-lent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us in-to the light, Keep us for-ev-er in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the plac-es, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we for-get Thee;
Shad-owed be-neath Thy hand, May we for-ev-er stand,
True to our God, True to our na-tive land.

Alternative Arrangement: *Lift Every Voice and Sing* arranged by Roland Carter, Nicole Heaston in the Purple Robe Song Series <https://youtu.be/jufE7HuY5nl>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.