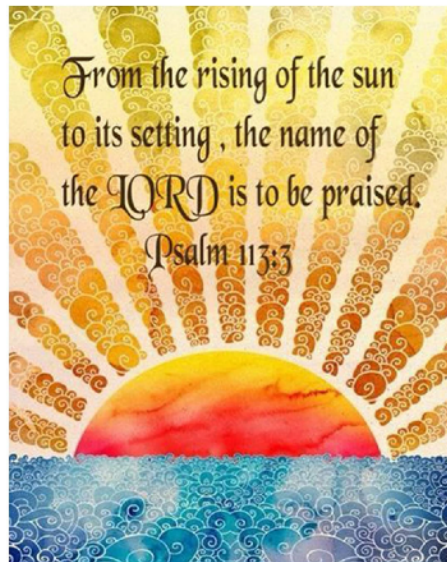


**Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**  
**Sunday, September 18, 2022**  
**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**The Rev Dr Scott Couper**  
**“10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)”**  
**Second of four in a sermon series entitled “Devotional Songs of Praise”**  
**Hebrew Scripture Reading: Psalm 113:1-8**



I promise you, I need a little sticky-note over my coffee maker that reminds me when I make ‘Mornin’ Joe’ every morning to put the mug underneath the spout where the coffee comes out. I can’t count how many times I have covered my counter and floor with a thin lake of coffee. It happens about once a month. The mother of my children used to affectionately say that I am like an ‘absent minded professor’. Exasperated, she would rhetorically ask, I assume, God, “How can someone so smart be so stupid!?”

I need reminders. Almost all of us need reminders about some things. Yes, true, some need reminders more than others. Reminders are good. They keep us focused. They ensure we are attentive. They prevent disasters. They help us be alert and aware. They often ensure that we are prepared.

In fact, just this morning, I could have used some reminders. I really got in a morning workout because I went up and down the stairs four times to get things that I was forgetting to bring to church this morning. The first thing I forgot was my clerical collar. I ran back up the stairs to get that. The second thing I forgot was my commentary on the Psalms. Back up the stairs. The third thing I forgot was my cup of coffee still on the counter. Back up the stairs for that. Back down the stairs. Then, I realized I forgot my phone. Back up and down the stairs for that! Whew!

This week, during our Centering Prayer, Bonnie Girvan reminded those who joined how important our bodies were. She guided our breath and our minds' foci on loving our bodies and thanking God for their functions. Even our toes. On a daily basis, I don't really think about my toes. To be honest, hardly at all, ever. Yet, I know I require them. They propel me forward. They are enormously important to maintain balance. Toes are something that one takes for granted. I mean seriously, who wakes us and gives thanks for their toes?! As with almost the entirety of our bodies, we only think about them and consciously appreciate our bodies when

they are sore or don't work as well as we would like. Rarely do we appreciate when all is going well.

This sermon series considers contemporary Christian music as means by which to **remind** us of God's benevolence and to cause us to be more intentionally appreciative of all the blessings in our lives. In short, contemporary Christian music can deepen our personal spiritual resources. I would like us all to consider listening to what is often termed 'praise music' as a private devotional practice. In this series, I am not suggesting nor advocating we use it for worship here in the sanctuary. I am merely suggesting that for someone who loves our choir and loves our organ, as I do, that contemporary Christian music can enhance one's spiritual awareness when at work, driving in the car, cooking, or even cleaning the house. If I could get our choir, Mary, and this beautiful organ in my apartment or my car every morning, I might not need Alexa to play my praise music. Ha! (I can just imagine our choir and music director on call all the time to be summoned to sing and play the organ for the minister while he is in the shower!)

This morning, while getting ready for church, I told Alexa to play 'Contemporary Christian Music'. Alexa likes to choose a station called 'Sacred Sounds'. I listen to music that praises God and reminds me of that for which I should be thankful. My spirit is lifted. My thoughts are positive. When I listen to

praise music, I can't help but reflect on my children, my friends, and all of you at Centre Church as God does – with sympathy, understanding, compassion, patience, and love. When I listen to music that praises God, I can't help but be thankful for our community, for my home, for the opportunity to be the minister of our church. I can hear the music when showering, and I am thankful for the water and my body, that while growing older is still very much able to be put to use for my benefit and others. When I eat, I am thankful for the selection of food I have, even when I have no time to go to the grocery store. (That's when I thank God for Loaves and Fishes and Ruth who bails me out with an Everyone Eats meal.)

Friends, my point this morning is that the song we will hear in a moment, and hundreds like it, enable us to more fully see and feel God's benevolent hand in each and every aspect of our lives. Listening to praise music is not pious. It is practice that should not engender self-righteousness. Listening to music that is infused with a love for God is simply a **reminder**. A reminder. And if you are like me, we all need reminders.

Our scripture reading this morning, Psalm 113, begins and ends with "Praise the Lord". One commentator describes this psalm as "an exquisite and quite complex piece of Hebrew poetry, presenting 'a theology of wonder which speaks

of a God whose greatness goes hand in hand with God's compassion for those most at risk in life".<sup>1</sup> Praise dominates the verses to an exceptional degree, even for a psalm. Verse four views God exalted not only above the earth, but even above the heavens – which our telescopes are seeing more and more of lately. Then in contrast to God's elevated otherness, God is described as having almost descended to have compassion and care for the needy. God's grace is highlighted.

Our contemporary Christian song this morning entitled "10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)" is similar to the psalm. The lyrics are poetry that focuses us, reminds us, and enables us to more faithfully praise God. "The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning, it's time to sing Your song again. Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me, let me be singing when the evening comes". Listening to this, I can't help but be **reminded** throughout the day to, as the Psalmist exclaims, "Praise the Lord".

This was the word of God. And it was delivered to the people of God. And the people of God responded, "Amen".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3K3roEF36k>, accessed September 18, 2002

Official Lyric/Chord video for "10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)" by Matt Redman. (C) 2014.

**Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin**

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Grogan, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 188.

**Chorus**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His holy Name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your holy Name.

**Verse 1**

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;  
It's time to sing Your song again.  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me,  
Let me be singing when the evening comes.

**Chorus**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His holy Name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your holy Name.

**Verse 2**

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,  
Your Name is great and Your heart is kind;  
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing,  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

**Chorus**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His holy Name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your holy Name.

**Verse 3**

And on that day when my strength is failing,  
The end draws near and my time has come;  
Still my soul sings Your praise unending,  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore.

**Chorus**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His holy Name.

Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your holy Name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
O my soul, worship His holy Name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul.  
I'll worship Your holy Name.