

“Telling God’s Truth”
A sermon by the Reverend Joe Genau
for Edgewood Presbyterian Church
June 24, 2018
Psalm 96
Hymn Sing Sunday

At 3:30 p.m. Central yesterday afternoon, the Apia Harvest Center Church in the nation of Samoa began Sunday morning worship at 9:30 a.m. their time. They were one of the first congregations to ring in the Lord’s Day.

Hour by hour across the globe, followers of Christ rose, had breakfast, and then met for worship. Starting with the Samoans, the story of God’s love for the world has been sung this day on islands and on mountaintops, in deserts and rain forests, in remote villages and in Beijing and Jerusalem and Cape Town and Paris and London and New York and Port Au Prince. God’s truth has been proclaimed in tiny house churches and cathedrals that have stood for centuries and in outdoor chapels and arenas and in storefronts and in parking lots.

This wave of Good News has made it to Birmingham and is surging toward the early-risers in the mountains and to Las Vegas and Boise and Calgary and Vancouver on to Los Angeles and then Anchorage and Honolulu. This afternoon for us, when it’s Sunday morning in American Samoa, the Cathedral of the Holy Family — just 140 miles from the Apia Harvest Center, but twenty-four hours apart thanks to the quirks of the International Date Line — will celebrate Mass.

It’s currently 4 a.m. on Monday in Samoa, so I’m hoping most of those folks are asleep. But it’s about 5 p.m. in Budapest, and I’m willing to wager there’s an evening vespers service somewhere along the Danube. It’s a near certainty on Sunday, but I have this inkling that at any given hour of every single day, someone, somewhere is singing God’s praises.

This past week at Living River’s Adventure Camp, Sarah Alice Morgan and Eva Leigh Metheny and Karin Bell and I did our part, singing God’s praises each morning and night. To my surprise, I was in charge of leading the music for worship. And yet, glory was somehow given to God.

From farm workers to nuns to old crooners to shower singers to people washing dishes while humming to preachers whistling to organists practicing to composers composing to choirs rehearsing to playlists shuffling to bell towers clanging to toddlers babbling words and tunes they’ve picked up — I think we’ve got it covered. I find it tremendously comforting to imagine an unbroken chain of praise encircling our world.

We sing a new song and tell of salvation and declare God’s glory and beg the trees of the forest to sing for joy. If we are stuck in a bad situation, or feeling angry at everything, or weary from keeping up

appearances, or exhausted from our responsibilities, or overwhelmed with grief, I wonder if it might help us to pause and realize that someone, somewhere, is making music that tells God's truth.

If we see hopelessness in the news and we feel helpless to respond, we can be assured that some believer is already singing about Pharaoh and prophets and lifting God above empire. And we can listen for that song and it just might lift our feet to join the beat and then join the hope-bringing.

If we can't lift our head from the pillow, a song of lament is echoing somewhere and reminding another to seek us out. If we've been beaten down and can't work up the nerve to believe in anything, another musician has taken our place and is holding the notes steadily until we can rejoin the choir.

This congregation is blessed with a wonderful choir and other talented musicians who step in for a duet or with a bassoon or on the piano. And the future is bright on all fronts: as the folks at Living River learned, EPC kids can sing! We're also blessed with a Music Director in Amanda who pours every ounce of her heart and her soul into finding music, leading the choir, and dreaming of new ways to make our worship more beautiful. And you've heard me tell many times of the countless hours that our organist spends honing her craft — never relenting and never satisfied that her immense talent will cover for a lack of preparation. Truly, we are blessed.

Our hymn sing today is a celebration of hymns that are meaningful and of the place that music has in our worship. Pat plays every single day and Amanda prepares so diligently and she and I work hard to plan worship services because doing all of this is our jobs. And we love to do it. And we want each Sunday to ring in your ears the rest of the week. But above all, we do it because it tells the truth about our God: in the words of hymns about creation and resurrection and justice and hope, and in providing something exquisite in a world that more and more values that which is disposable and tacky and mediocre.

So many hours are spent chasing money and earthly power and validation and the approval of people who aren't paying us any mind. In this hour each Sunday — and, thanks be to God, in all the hours in between, somewhere — we chase instead the Alleluia, giving praise and thanks to our God, whose truth must be told always. Amen.