

07/02/23

Shout It Out Loud

Psalms 89:1-4, 15-18; Matthew 10:40-42

In my home growing up we were encouraged strongly to keep our voices at speaking level, not to raise them, to remain calm, and not yell. Shouting, yelling, screaming, playing loud music, none of it was allowed in our home. My father called it noise pollution. The one time I recall getting a spanking was when I threw a temper tantrum loud and clear for all to see and hear on a public beach. Even while playing tennis which was our family sport, shouting, yelling, or raising voices was not countenanced—not on the court nor on the sidelines. I recognized a different decibel level in my friends' homes. Many of their families allowed loud music in their homes and cars, and yelling was common whether due to anger or joy.

Over the years I've learned how to *shout it out loud*. One way is through music. I've always loved singing and making music so learning about dynamics in music was a wonderful discovery for how to express a range of emotion. Seeing a triple *f* on the score and recognizing that the piece was to be played or sung extra, extra loud was thrilling. I've also lived into shouting, yelling, and screaming on the sports field sidelines claiming *Soccer Mom* as a badge of honor. Over time I've gone through several iterations of what that looks & sounds like and landed on what I consider to be a reasonable level of enthusiasm for my player balanced with enthusiasm for the teams on the field.

In Psalm 89 that Nancy read for us today there's a shouting, yelling, calling out exclamatory tenor to the poetry that temple musician Ethan the Ezrahite offers. That

name is in the superscription for Psalm 89. Recall verses 15-16, “Happy are the people who know the **festal shout**, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance; they exult in your name all day long, and extol your righteousness.” If these verses were scored to music there would be a triple *f* as in triple forte or fortissimo, or very, very loud.

Shouting, yelling, screaming is allowed and condoned in scripture and those who do it are blessed or happy. What is the festal shout?? According to Scott Schauf, Professor of Religious Studies at Gardner-Webb University, the festal shout is from,

“The Hebrew word, *teru’ah*, used to convey such things as trumpets blowing and war cries, but in the Psalms it usually denotes a shout of acclamation or joy toward God. To ‘know the festal shout’ is thus to express the joy that comes from experiencing God’s steadfast love and faithfulness. . . . The ‘festal shout’ is something that can only be known collectively, as the gathered people of God. However loud one might yell, one cannot produce a ‘festal shout’ on one’s own!”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Schauf interprets the festal shout as emerging from a gathered faith community such as perhaps in corporate singing, or perhaps alongside a community celebration, where an *Amen* or *Praise the Lord* may be exclaimed as a way of expressing joy. Here at PPC we are exclaiming our festal shout as a community as we *Celebrate 60* this Summer!

Another way for to understand the festal shout from Psalm 89 comes from author Kristen Smeltzer who writes in her blog,

“I discovered that the Hebrew word translated into ‘festal shout’ actually means an *acclamation of joy* or a *battle cry*. As I pondered this, I felt God saying that the

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Schauf. “Commentary on Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18.” 6/26/11 [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)

festal shout is not simply a shout of triumph, celebration, or joy during times of victory. Nor is it necessarily a cry going forth into battle against an enemy you are sure to defeat.

Anyone can shout for joy when things are going their way or when triumph is a certainty. But what about when it appears all hope is lost? What about when the odds are not only against you, but victory seems impossible? What about when your unyielding circumstances are washing over you in waves, and you feel you are about to drown?

I believe the festal shout is about faith. It is a choosing—a choice to shout in faith and anticipated victory, against all odds and despite all evidence to the contrary. It is a war stance—a declaration that, ‘My God is greater than my enemy. And because of [*God’s*] greatness, I will be more than a conqueror.’

In Joshua 6:20 we find the same Hebrew word translated ‘festal shout’ as in Psalm 89. . . . Joshua understood that a festal shout of faith in a mighty God could take down walls, defeat a massive enemy and capture a city. He knew that, with God, he could do the impossible. . . .

[Smeltzer continues,] As I read Psalm 89, I had a vision of people who faced insurmountable circumstances doing a tribal, festal shout over their trials, diseases, marital problems, financial debt, [personal despair], etc. I saw individuals writing their impossible situations down on pieces of paper and then throwing them on the floor. Then I saw them dancing over the top of them—shouting with a communal, festal shout—declaring God’s extravagant goodness and mighty power over each one. I then saw these papers being thrown into a fire or destroyed in some way. And...the *walls* came tumbling down.”<sup>2</sup>

I thought that was a creative and visual way to interpret the festal shout—this overcoming all obstacles because of faith in God’s presence, care, and protection. It’s likened to a happy dance, a victory lap, or a huge high five. A bold communal declaration that we’ve got this and this situation whatever challenge it may be, won’t get the best of us because God is with us. And then I was reminded of our short Gospel reading from Matthew and

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<sup>2</sup> Kristen M. Smeltzer. “The Festal Shout.” 2017 [www.kristensmeltzer.com](http://www.kristensmeltzer.com)

thought how sometimes actions, even seemingly small ones can speak louder than bold, boisterous, fighting words.

In the Gospel reading for today, Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, “whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of the little ones in the name of a disciple will not lose their reward.” Jesus’ instructions to the disciples are to care for the little ones. Loud, extravagant, boisterous words and actions are not necessary here. Jesus says, the simple act of giving a cup of cold water to someone in need is enough to express and live out your faith in me. I wonder if that might be another form of festal shout. I wonder if that might be a shout of acclamation toward God—sharing a cup of cold water with a little one.

Then I thought about my father’s need for calm and quiet in our home where he didn’t allow or condone shouting *but* the way in which he lived his life was one of action and service to others because of his strong faith in God. I know I’ve shared some of the stories of my father’s legacy with you about his faith that motivated him to require pro bono hours to be done by the lawyers who received work from his probate court. His faith in Jesus motivated him to found halfway homes for recently released prisoners in the state of CT, and his faith in the Holy Spirit was why he welcomed into our home youth and adults who needed temporary lodging when it wasn’t available or safe for them. He did these things because of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples concerning the necessity of caring for the little ones. It seems to me that these are all festal shouts just not the out loud Soccer Mom kind, but these actions shout it out loud that Jesus is Lord, without the yelling.

I would like to suggest that this week we keep our eyes open and be alert to even our most casual actions which may be opportunities to, say a kind word, or to make a friendly phone call, or to text words of encouragement, or to walk or run in support of a worthy cause, or to pick weeds in a garden that's growing vegetables for folks who don't get many veggies, or to offer a cup of cold water in Jesus' name. I'm thinking that these might be ways for us to offer the festal shout and shout it out loud this week without yelling. Jesus says, "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—will not lose their reward."

Let's you and I try to shout it out loud this week, because sometimes actions speak louder than words. Thanks be to God.

Amen

Let's stand and sing Psalm 89 in triple forte hymn #67 My Song Forever Shall Record