

# Psalm Sundays

Text  
Psalm 150

Topic  
The instruments build and build and build  
to a crescendo of loud, clashing cymbals

Title  
***"I Gotta Have More Cymbal"***

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Songwriters call it "staggered." It's when a song is arranged so that it starts with one vocalist or instrument, then adds more vocals and instruments gradually.

*Behind Blue Eyes* by The Who is a good example. It starts with a single guitar... Then a single vocalist comes in... Then more and more vocals... Then the bass... Then another guitar... Then 2:20 into it, the full band.

Metallica's *Enter Sandman* and *In the Air Tonight* by Phil Collins are similarly staggered.

If you're much of a classic rock fan, you can probably think of a few songs that start calm, but build, then at a certain point, you gotta crank the dial to full as they bring it. *Stairway to Heaven*, for example.

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*"I Gotta Have More Cymbal"*



OK, you're a fan of Country Music. The first staggered song that comes to mind: *The Gambler*, by the late Kenny Rogers. It opens with some finger picking... Then vocals... Then there's some kind of percussion that sounds like a combination of a wooden block and dripping water. Instruments continue to build after that until the full band joins in.

### **Psalm 150 is staggered, and it builds:**

- 👤 It opens with what reads like a vocal solo in verses one and two.
- 👤 In verses three through five, no less than eight instruments are introduced one-at-a-time, and some of those are plural.
- 👤 The last verse is a turn-the-dial-to-full volume involving "everything that has breath."

We'd expect nothing less from the closing psalm.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Your Praise Is Possessive As God's Plan For You Builds**, and **#2 Your Praise Is Progressive As God's Plan For You Builds**.

### **#1 - Your Praise Is Possessive As God's Plan For You Builds (v1-2)**

The psalms are songs. We may not have the sheet music; but we must remember that they are songs.

In our commitment to teach verse-by-verse, we are driven to exposit the psalms as we do the historical books, or the Gospels, or the Epistles. If we do that with psalms, we are cheating ourselves.

Songs tend to elicit emotions and feelings. There's nothing wrong with being inspired to feel by a psalm. In fact, we *should* get emotional.

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If Psalm 150 doesn't elicit strong feelings, we're not doing it justice.

Psa 150:1 Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

The final five psalms begin and end with "Praise the LORD," i.e., "Hallelujah!" It's good to be reminded that "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

There is going to be a lot of praising in our future. We won't be sitting around playing harps, doing nothing. It's more like everything will be so truly awesome that praising the LORD will be a constant. There's a scene in chapter five of the Revelation where "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels break out in praise, followed by "every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them... saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power *Be* to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

In our psalm, the people of God were gathered at His "sanctuary," probably the Second Temple.

- 👤 Around 586BC, King Nebuchadnezzar's troops destroyed the first Temple - built by Solomon. They were held as captives in Babylon for 70 years.
- 👤 The Second Temple was built by Zerubbabel and others after the Jews returned from captivity. It is sometimes called, Zerubbabel's Temple. In New Testament times, Herod was remodeling Zerubbabel's Temple into the magnificent structure most of us think of today. It is sometimes referred to as Herod's Temple. But Herod's Temple is still considered to be the Second Temple.

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(If you're counting, the Temple that we read about in the Great Tribulation will be the third).

The Temple in Jerusalem was the real estate on the earth that God had prescribed in order to meet with Israel. Concerning the Ark of the Covenant that would be placed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, we read in Exodus, "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel" (25:22).

I'm sure you've been to a music concert of some sort. The audience listens excitedly to the performance.

If the psalms have taught us anything, it is that in the sanctuary, *the people were not an audience*. They were **participants**.

Today, in the Church Age, there is no physical Temple. "Sanctuary" has a different meaning. At least two, in fact:

- 🧠 Jesus makes His sanctuary **in** the individual believer. In First Corinthians 3:16 we read, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?"
- 🧠 Jesus also makes His sanctuary **among** His people collectively. In Second Corinthians 6:16, speaking of the gathered believers, the apostle Paul said, "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

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We're not an audience when we are gathered as the church. By our very presence, we are expected to be participants. Pastor Chuck Smith used to say that we are the choir.

Corporate worship should not be a performance. The worship team is here to lead us into our singing so that, all together, we are praising Jesus.

"Praise Him in His mighty firmament!" can be translated, Praise Him *in the heavens.*" The psalmist's thoughts became elevated beyond life on the earth. He became aware that he was standing in the presence of Almighty God... In the specific place on earth that the LORD chose... Surrounded by the universe.

Think of it like this. David once sang, "What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4).

It was that same awareness that all the universe, and the earth in it, and the Temple on the earth, was created with the sole purpose of God having a relationship with me; with you; with whosoever will believe on Him.

Nonbelievers think it is ignorant and arrogant to suggest that the earth has that much significance in our vast universe.

That is largely because they scoff at, and immediately dismiss, special creation. When you approach Genesis as literal history, given to us by God (Who was there), you see that creation was necessary so that He could make man in His image, and walk in a loving relationship with us.

Is that arrogant? I'd say it was romantic.

How many songs are there about what you'd give to the one you love if only you could?

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Your Song has been covered by many artists:

*I don't have much money, but boy, if I did,  
I'd buy a big house where we both could live.  
I know it's not much, but it's the best I can do.  
My gift is my song and this one's for you.*

In *All I Have to Give*, the Backstreet Boys sing, "I wish I could give the world to you but love is all I have to give." Not very original, but you get the idea.

Well guess what? **God IS in a position to give the world to us.** His love for us is extravagant. Why wouldn't He create a universe for us?

Have you watched *It's a Wonderful Life* this season? Trying to convey his love for Mary, George says to her, "What is it you want, Mary? What do you want? You want the moon? Just say the word, and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down."

The word I'm using to convey all this is possessive. It's a word that can carry a negative connotation. But not if you are in love. As a romance word, it is endearing. It suggests a healthy desire to keep and protect the one you love.

Psa 150:2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

We might be tempted to think of "His mighty acts" as the parting of the Red Sea for Moses; or the day the sun stood still for Joshua; or the global flood in the days of Noah. Mighty acts indeed!

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In the context set by verse one, His “mighty acts” would be His redeeming the human race by His plan to come into the world as the God-man to die in our place on the Cross. When you think about them, the flood, the Red Sea, halting the sun, were all performed by God for one purpose: To further His plan to provide the world with the Savior, Jesus Christ.

**W**hat a great start to this last psalm. The people of God were in the one place in the entire universe where the presence of God was revealed to them in a mighty way.

Wherever we are, gathered together, collectively, **we** are that place in the universe where God manifests His presence in mighty ways.

Jesus is possessive of us. We ought to be possessive of Him. We do it by not allowing anyone, or anything, to distract us from our beloved Bridegroom.

## **#2 - Your Praise Is Progressive As God’s Plan For You Builds (v3-6)**

I think it’s safe to say that You’re a little bit Country, and I’m a little bit Rock n’ Roll.

Musical styles... Musical instruments... Song selection. Christians are never going to agree. And it doesn’t seem Christians want to agree to disagree.

Can we take our cue for corporate worship from the psalms? Even if we wanted to, it would be hard. Biblical Archaeology Review noted the following:

There are no ancient music notations to inform us on the music arrangements of psalms. What’s more, even though the collection of Biblical psalms as we know it from the Hebrew Bible was established quite late, the oldest psalms were likely composed already in the 14th century BC, from which we have no

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adequate documentation from Israelites themselves. We do not possess depictions of people performing psalms. The Bible does not tell us much about how psalms were originally performed.

God has wisely not prescribed any single liturgy. We have freedom to worship Him in new ways, with new songs.

We *can* say, from Psalm 150, that just about every instrument available was employed.

Psa 150:3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!

Psa 150:4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

Psa 150:5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

Before we move on, I should say something about “Praise Him with... **dance.**” Every few years, dance gets reintroduced into worship, usually at an influential church. It’s mostly what you’d call ‘interpretive dance,’ a soloist or a troop praising God through their movements.

The Hebrew word for “dance” used here is *machol*. Since it’s a Hebrew word, in a Jewish context, let’s let a Jewish resource explain it to us:

The Bible doesn’t tell us what their dancing looked like exactly, but early Jewish literature presented the *machol* as a **circle dance**. The 16th century Jewish sage known as the Maharal of Prague explains that in a circle every person faces God, who is in the center, equally and divinely connecting to Him from all sides. At all Jewish *simchas* (festive occasions) such as weddings, or bat mitzvahs, and many of the Jewish holidays, you will see Jews cheerfully **dancing in circles with arms tightly locked as brothers.**

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If you want to dance at church - lock and loop. You can use the ga-ga pit. We can rename it the Machol Pit. You can do a Machol Minuet... Or a Machol Moonwalk.

I don't think the list of instruments in Psalm 150 was meant to be exclusive. The psalmist meant to convey that *any* and *all* instruments could be used in praising the LORD in song. Stringed or wind or percussion - properly arranged to bring attention to the LORD - use them.

One of our guiding principles here at CalvaryHanford is to recognize the gifts and abilities of the believers who decide to lock arms with us (so to speak). With regards to those who lead us as the choir... If there were no guitar players, but there were piano players... We'd be piano-led, because that's God's gifting to us.

If there were no musicians at all, we'd sing *a cappella*.

We do have some basic, bedrock ideas about style:

- 🧠 We prefer contemporary choruses over hymns; it's just who we are. We were a result of the revival historians call the Jesus Movement. One of the questions we asked and answered was, "Why should the devil have all the good music?"
- 🧠 We like order rather than chaos, so we don't open-up Sunday mornings to the congregation sharing their individual spiritual gifts.

We can't be sure that this psalm was staggered, starting with vocals then adding instruments one at a time, then more instruments, crescendo-ing with "loud cymbals" and "clanging cymbals." But I'd like to think so.

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Psa 150:6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

I read somewhere this week, "Every breath is the gift of God and praise is the worthy response we should make for that gift."

Derek Kidner noted that the literal phrase is, "Let all breath praise the Lord." Then he commented, "His glory fills the universe; His praise must do no less." .

John Trapp wrote, "We have all as much reason to praise God as we have need to draw breath."

G. Campbell Morgan said, "The one condition of praise is the possession of breath, that is to say, life received from Him must return in praise to Him." Albert Barnes said, "Let a breathing universe combine in one solemn service of praise." He was thinking ahead to eternity when the universe will have been redeemed and restored by God's plan for it. Praise will be the vey air that we breathe.

There's a lyric in a song by Chicago that captures a sense of what our praising God on earth is like: "Only the beginning of what I want to feel forever."

What do I mean, your praise is progressive? Simply that you grow in praise as you make progress along God's plan for your life. Every up, every down, and all that is in between, can further your awe at the wonder of His love for you.

Every morning you awake, God's mercies are yours to experience in news ways. Every blessing, every buffeting, takes you deeper into His love for you.

You don't just make progress on your path. You make progress in knowing Jesus.

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When I was a young believer, Pastor Don McClure quoted Psalm 103:7, “[God] made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.” He pointed out that Israel knew of God, through His works. But Moses knew the ways of God - His heart, His purposes, His character. He had progressed.

If you want to know the ways, and not just the works, of God, start by embracing grace. If you’re going to err, err on the side of grace. Read the Bible with grace in mind, not law. Prefer the spirit of the law, not the letter of it.

Here’s a gauge: In your Christian walk, and in ministering to others, do you emphasize what you must do for God? Or do you emphasize what God has done for you?

**T**hus ends the Book of Psalms. Alexander Maclaren said, “Psalm 150 is more than an artistic close of the Psalter: it is a prophecy of the last result of the devout life, and, in its unclouded sunniness, as well as in its universality, it proclaims the certain end of the weary years for the individual and for the world.”

We sing a song here, *Golden City*. One of its lyrics is,

*Soon your trials will be over  
Offered up by mercy's hand  
A better view than where you're standing  
A doorway to another land*

F.B. Meyer said, “Your life may resemble the psalter with its varying moods, its light and shadow, its sob and smile; but it will end with *Hallelujahs!* if only you will keep true to the *will* and *way* and *work* of the Most Holy.”

