



The 98th Psalm that we heard this morning is not only inviting us children of God to sing a new song of joy and hope to our Lord, but that evidently, the Creation can sing, too. This was the time of year, down on the farm, when plenty of sounds erupted from the surrounding rural landscape. It started early in the morning when engines of massive equipment from combines and tractors revved up before an immense crackling of stones as they drove off from our driveway. Soon enough, old, decaying corn stalks would ferociously crash down to earth as that combine bulldozed over them. Their seeds would flow in a symphony into a neighboring wagon, before they would be taken off to a nearby bin, creating a noise that could be so deafening that you don't even realize anything else in the world is going on around you.

Now, interspersed through all that, there could be some brief moments of eerie silence, almost as if the Creation is attempting to rest from its enormous song. But soon enough, the massive equipment returns, and oftentimes it would happen in the middle of the night, as if there is seemingly no end in sight to the work of the conductor farmer, who must outsmart weather patterns and field conditions in helping bring the Creation's masterpiece to life. The immense crackling of stones signifying but a brief moment for a break in the music of the natural world.

"Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing." We as the church do our best to take advantage of the changing scenic landscape around us: to connect all those transitions in nature to our own life. That so much of it does not seem to last forever. Changes with jobs, family, the church: so much of it well, well beyond our control. As much as so many thoroughly delight in this time of year of leaves changing colors, and the all-around fall scenery, the reality of it all may not be so easy for every onlooker to appreciate.

My father has been farming thousands of acres' worth of corn and soybeans for decades. It has been in the family for generations to do exactly that. There came a time when my grandfather had to face the fall season of his life: when he recognized that he was not able to do as much as he would like in bringing the song of the Creation to fruition, when he knew his body was not able to pull off quite the same level of springtime newness. The changing landscape of his personal world could not have been easy to accept. At some point, in the not too distant future, that must happen to my father, too; not to mention, at some point, for all of us.

However, there are other sets of joyful noises emerging from that part of Creation. They are the voices of my sister and her son, my nephew, who have, for years now, been part of bringing the song of Creation to life. They bring in their source of hope and determination and resilience to insist that the masterpiece will continue for more decades to come. It is yet another transition in the seasons of living on this earth that is incredibly difficult, full of unknowns, which are just as much part of our earthly symphony. However, interspersed through all of that are moments of holy silence, when we can bask in the natural world around us, and sit in the awe-inspiring wonder of Creation that has not only been feeding humanity, but soothing our hearts, and filling us with joy to go out and do our part in singing a new song to the Lord.

Soon enough, harvest time will come to an end. Along the way, it is always filled with chaos, not just the sounds, but the fears and the worries of how it can possibly come together, yet again. But somehow it happens over and over again. And sometimes, it takes some help from family and other loved ones. Somehow it happens through transitions and fears and worries galore. We wonder how *we* will get by another season of aches and pains, not to mention the deafening noises of hatred and evil, attempting to take over what is meant to be a most wonderful symphony of God's tranquility. Yes, they will be allowed to have their moments in the song, but God will respond with more hope, more joy, more love to fill the whole world.

Sometimes, it happens through those who have been through their fair share of seasons on this earth: those who struggle to get up and down steps on farm machinery. Sometimes, it happens through the younger generations, who we insist have no work ethic and no contribution whatsoever to make to this world. Sometimes, it happens in the background, in fields of broken-down corn stalks, where decaying things will help feed God's children near and far away. Sometimes, it happens without us even recognizing the song of Creation is going on at all. But time and time again, God will notice. God will cherish that overlooked section of the symphony. And God will insist on empowering all of us going through whatever season of life, as if nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord, now and forevermore. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!