

Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord

A few years ago I attended the funeral of a man who was 94 years old. During the course of the funeral, the preacher shared a story about the man -- something that had happened back when the man was about 13 years old. It was a sad story, but I have thought of it often since then.

When this man was a young boy, he went to church and was taking part in the congregational singing. Apparently someone at church made some hurtful remarks to him about his singing voice -- perhaps making fun of him. The criticism might have been innocent enough -- and perhaps it was even done in an attempt to help somehow -- but it hurt the young man's feelings so much that he decided he would never sing in church again. And to the preacher's knowledge -- he never sang in church again!

To me, this story is especially sad. I have never considered myself to have a great singing voice. At best, my singing talent is average -- but I have always enjoyed congregational singing in church! It is one thing to listen to voices singing together in praise to God, but it is quite another to join in and participate! We praise God and encourage one another in our singing -- and it has been a blessing to me over the years. How much encouragement I would have missed if I had decided -- because of the criticism of some foolish person -- to never sing in church again!

We should be very careful when handing out criticism of others -- especially when it comes to their worship or service to God. Perhaps someone is offering their best -- doing what they can do -- but we consider our "offering" of much higher quality. Who are we to judge such in such matters? Who are we to make light of or to criticize someone else's offering to God?

On the other hand, even though the young boy's feelings were hurt, he should not have let that deter him from singing praises to God! It has been my observation that any time we attempt to do anything for God, we will be met (often immediately) with criticism or obstacles in some form. We should not let these occasional roadblocks cause us to give up.

I have often wondered if the person who so embarrassed and hurt the feelings of the young boy realized the damage and the hurt they had caused? I really doubt it... they probably went on their way and thought little else about it. But just think -- for 81 years, this man carried this hurt, this wound, this embarrassment, this scar. Our words -- even when we may be joking -- can cut like knives and leave painful scars.

Sometimes at church, when I hear people nearby singing off-key, I remember this story. I also wonder if people sitting within earshot of me are reminded of similar things!

Oh well, the Lord said, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord..." (Psalms 100:1), and that is what I intend to keep doing!

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