

“Old Testament Fall Festivals: The Feast of Trumpets”

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

September 6, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

Hymns for Worship Video – September 6, 2020

“Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet” #466 in the Book of Praise

Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet,
Praise the Lord with the harp and lute,
Praise the Lord with the gentle-sounding flute.
Praise the Lord in the field and forest,
Praise the Lord in the city square,
Praise the Lord anytime and anywhere.
Praise the Lord in the wind and sunshine,
Praise the Lord in the dark of night,
Praise the Lord in the rain or snow or in the morning light.
Praise the Lord in the deepest valley,
Praise the Lord on the highest hill,
Praise the Lord; never let your voice be still.

Praise the Lord with the crashing cymbal,
Praise the Lord with the pipe and string,
Praise the Lord with the joyful songs you sing.
Praise the Lord on a weekday morning,
Praise the Lord on a Sunday noon,
Praise the Lord by the light of sun or moon.
Praise the Lord in the time of sorrow,
Praise the Lord in the time of joy,
Praise the Lord every moment; nothing let your praise destroy.
Praise the Lord in the peace and quiet,
Praise the Lord in your work or play,
Praise the Lord everywhere in every way!

Words & Music: Natalie Sleeth

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“Sing a New Song Unto the Lord” #422 in the Book of Praise

Refrain:

Sing a new song unto the Lord;
Let your song be sung from mountain’s height.
Sing a new song unto the Lord,
Singing hallelujah!

For God’s people dance for joy. Oh come before the Lord,
Play for the Lord on glad tambourines,
And let your trumpet sound.

Refrain:

Rise, O children, from your sleep, your Saviour now has come.
He has turned your sorrow to joy,
And filled your soul with song.

Refrain:

Glad my soul for I have seen the glory of the Lord.
The trumpet sounds; the dead shall be raised
I know my Saviour lives.

Refrain:

*Words: Psalm 98; paraphrase Daniel L. Schutte; Music: Daniel L. Schutte
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Scripture Texts: Leviticus 23:23-25

²³ *The Lord said to Moses,* ²⁴ *“Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵ Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the Lord.’”*

Revelation 10:7; 11:15-18

⁷ *But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”*

¹⁵ *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:
“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.”*

¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying:*

*“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.*

¹⁸ *The nations were angry,*

*and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your people who revere your name,
both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”*

Meditation

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's Labour Day Weekend, and part of my brain is questioning how we got here so quickly, while another part is relieved we are just about through the summer. I like the warm sun, but I can do without the humidity, and there has been a lot of it this summer. I will be glad to see the fall arrive. This year it seems almost surreal that we are into September because the past several months have been so strange. My sons have been at home since March. We haven't been in the sanctuary for the same stretch of time. When we gather in this special place once again, it will feel different as the worship format will be new and not everyone will be physically present. Some will continue to worship online or with printed worship resources in order to protect their health as things are still rather uncertain. We respect whatever decision each one makes, for the family of God remains no matter where we are to offer worship and praise.

This is the first week in September, and as students and teachers are making their way back to a variety of learning environments, there is a sense of it being a new season. We are praying for the protection and strength of all who return to school – in class or online. With this new season of worship, service and learning, I thought it might be interesting to take a journey through some of the special transitional moments in the lives of our biblical ancestors. Today we are beginning a three-part series on the fall festivals of the Old Testament. It will be a time to learn more about the traditions of the past. I hope it will shed some light on some of the significant moments in the historical development of our faith, and help us to understand our own history more deeply. These reflections are inspired by an article in the periodical “Reformed Worship.”¹

The festival on which we will reflect today is the Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah. It is New Year's Day on the Jewish calendar. It is observed on the first and second days of the seventh month – September or October on our calendar, and is meant to remember God's having completed the work of creation on the seventh day, and the taking stock of creation, judging the actions of God's people. “So Rosh Hashanah is both a festival of celebration of the beginning of the world and also a time of utmost seriousness. According to one part of Jewish tradition, it is on Rosh Hashanah that God records people's names in the Book of Life. So as they leave the

¹ Reformedworship.org. Article “Sound the Trumpet: Celebrating the Old Testament Fall festivals.” By John F. Schuurman and Jane Tiemersma Vogel. September, 2001.

synagogue after Rosh Hashanah services, people say to each other, ‘May your name be written in the Book of Life.’”²

The traditions for this festival are simple. There is only one major requirement for this day in the Bible. The shofar, or ram’s horn, must be sounded. *On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts (Lev 34:24).* Why a ram’s horn? It connects the people to the promises of God from the beginning of their relationship with God. It reminds them, symbolically, of the promise to spare the people and make them a great nation. It was a ram’s horns, caught in a thicket, that spared Isaac’s life when Abraham took him up a mountain to offer him as a sacrifice, even though it was Isaac upon whom God’s promise to save the world depended. If not for that ram, the hope of the promise would have died with the boy. The ram’s horn trumpet blast was heard on Mount Sinai, it was used as a battle cry and as a warning. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of warning for the day of the coming of the Lord. Paul writes of triumphant blasts on the trumpet, and the completion of the great plan of salvation is heralded in Revelation when the seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet blast. Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet!

The Reformed Church of North America has adopted an affirmation of faith that is not an official confession, but was approved in its second edition in 2008 as a hymn-like statement of faith. It not only continues the reformed tradition of this kind of statement, it addresses contemporary issues the church faces. One of the stanzas refers to Jesus’ return to this world in triumph over all that has opposed him. It reads:

“We long for that day when Jesus will return as triumphant king,
when the dead will be raised and all people will stand before his judgment.
We face that day without fear, for the Judge is our Saviour.
Our daily lives of service aim for the moment when the Son will present his people to the Father.
Then God will be shown to be true, holy, and gracious.
All who have been on the Lord’s side will be honoured, the fruit of even small acts of obedience
will be displayed;
but tyrants and oppressors, heretics, and all who deny the Lord will be damned.”³

The Feast of Trumpets is meant to celebrate the beginning of the world, and also acknowledge the seriousness of God’s judgement of the world, which is no more graphically portrayed than in John’s vision or revelation that brings the New Testament to a close. There are so many references to Christ’s return with the sound of trumpets...

“And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll; the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, even so, it is well with my soul.”⁴ The beloved hymn by Horatio Spafford reminds us of the victorious nature of Christ’s return. Think about the

² Quoted from the article “Sound the Trumpet: Celebrating the Old Testament Fall festivals.” See note 1 for reference information.

³ “Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony” Stanza 57. The Reformed Church of North America, 2008. (Adapted for Canadian spelling)

⁴ “It is Well with my Soul” Horatio Gates Spafford | Philip Paul Bliss. © Words & Music: Public Domain. CCLI License # 1952948

coronation of a new monarch with trumpets sounding, or the arrival of a queen or king to the sound of horns blasting and crowds cheering. Fantasy movies with great battle scenes sound trumpets as battle begins, and as victory is won. On Remembrance Day we listen to the sound of a trumpet as we feel both the sorrow and gratitude of sacrifice and victory. A trumpet is a rather powerful instrument when it comes to celebration and acknowledgement of something significant. It really is an appropriate instrument to acknowledge and symbolize our hope in God through Jesus' triumphant return to claim his people of all times and places.

The feast of trumpets is not literally about trumpets, but is an acknowledgement of what God has done, what God is still doing, and what God has promised – both judgement and salvation. It is a festival to acknowledge as a reminder of all this. For us, in the Christian Church, we also acknowledge what God has done, what God is still doing, and what God has promised, as we gather around the Lord's Table to join in a symbolic feast of bread and cup. Just as the Jewish community follows the example set by its ancestors at God's command, the Christian community follows the example set by Jesus himself, as he commanded his disciples to remember him through the bread broken and the cup shared. Communion isn't literally about pieces of bread and cups of grape juice, but about what they symbolize – the crucified body and shed blood of Christ for the salvation of all who would believe in him. It is a sacrament to be celebrated as a reminder of what God has done for us in Christ. Jesus reigns victorious over sin and death, shares that victory with his followers, and will bring us at the last to share in his glory with blasts of trumpets at his return.

So you see, the Feast of Trumpets may not be something we celebrate in the Christian church, but it is not so removed from our faith that it is meaningless for us. We too acknowledge God's creation of the world and all that is within, and we take seriously the future glory that awaits us. Perhaps the next time you hear a trumpet, it will take on a new meaning for you, and you will take a moment to give thanks for Christ's victory, a victory he shares through faith in him. Amen.