

Marty's Devotion Week 11
The Sovereignty of God
John 12:27-36

27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. 34 So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,

It might not be an obvious transition to go from this scripture to a discussion of the sovereignty of God. However, as I was reading this Scripture it was in the next few scriptures as John shares from Isaiah that point to the death of Jesus that it became apparent to me that many of the Old Testament prophets had a view of eternity that we often miss. They understood God's sovereignty. And on Sunday we will see this in the story of Joseph.

Genesis 50:15-21... 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 17 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you."' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people[b] should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

If we say we believe in God and trust in His work, we must not live as a "Willy Nilly" who is thrown and tossed by the things and doubts of this world. We must stand firm. We must hold fast to the truth. We need to obey and love. In the darkness of our world and time we must believe that God is Sovereign over ever evil, "[what men] meant it for evil, but God meant it for good..." (Gen. 50:20). God is mighty and powerful so that making something good out of what is intended for evil is absolutely possible.

Mighty is Our God by Greco, Moen and Gustafson

Eugene Greco was born in Rome New York in 1960. He was a precocious musician who at an early age could copy and mimic what he heard on the piano. He began lessons at age 7 and completed a degree in piano performance from the Crane School of music. In 1987, Eugene followed Mary Nystom (As the Deer) as the head of the music department for Christ for the Nations Institute in Stony Brook, NY. He recalls that the students loved to sing praises to God and would sing the same songs over and over. Eugene took a phrase from Revelation 4:11 that focused on the greatness of God. He titled it "Mighty is Our God" and the students loved it. It was not long before the chorus caught the attention of other pastors by way of a demo tape of several choruses that were sent to Christ for the Nations in Dallas. Integrity heard the demo and it caught the attention of Don Moen and Garret Gustafson. Don and Garret wrote the B part and formed the complete song that we sing today.

Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus by Duffield and Webb

This short story is so moving, I could not have said it any better.

"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" was a hymn inspired by the dying message of Dudley Tyng, a young preacher in Philadelphia who was forced to resign from his Episcopal church pastorate for speaking out against slavery in the mid-1800s.

In addition to starting a new church, Tyng and other ministers preached revival meetings at the local YMCA during lunch and soon began to attract thousands (this revival period is known as "The Work of God in Philadelphia.") In March of 1858 Tyng preached a rousing sermon to 5,000 young men at the YMCA and over 1,000 made a profession of faith. During his sermon he supposedly said, "I would rather that this right arm was amputated at the trunk than that I should come short of my duty to you in delivering God's message."

Only a few days later Tyng left the study of his country home to visit his barn where a mule was harnessed to a machine that was shelling corn. When he patted the mule, his sleeve was caught in the cogs of the wheel and his arm was badly maimed. He passed away the following week from the injury.

Before he died, he was asked if he had a message for the ministers at the revival and he replied, "Tell them, 'Let us all stand up for Jesus.'" His friend and fellow preacher, Dr. George Duffield, was touched by the words and wrote the hymn Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. Duffield concluded his sermon the following Sunday by reading the lyrics as a tribute to his friend.

Duffield's Sunday School superintendent printed copies of the poem, the lyrics soon found their way into a Baptist newspaper and the hymn spread from there.

Several melodies have been written for Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. The one used in most hymnals was written by George Webb, founder of the Boston Academy of Music. He wrote the tune in 1837 originally for "Tis Dawn, the Lark is Singing," a song in a secular musical.

Amazing Grace, My Chains are Gone by John Newton and Chris Tomlin

So, what does former slave trader turned preacher and a contemporary Christian writer have in common? It seems they have a movie in common. In the movie, *Amazing Grace*, the story of William Wilberforce, Chris was approached about doing something with the hymn “Amazing Grace”. He was very reluctant because, in his own words, “it’s a perfect hymn, what could I add to it?” But as he read the life of John Newton and he pondered what it must have been like to be set free, not only as a slave but as one who sold slaves he thought:

After briefly recounting Wilberforce’s work toward abolishing the slave trade in Europe, Tomlin explains the life of “Wilberforce’s mentor,” John Newton (1725-1807), who wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace” (1779) after his conversion and abandonment of his career as a slave trader. While pondering the proposal, Tomlin read about the history of John Newton and reflected on the depth of the lyrics in their context of slavery. Out of this reflection, he had an epiphany: “So these words just started flowing one night—my chains are gone, I’ve been set free, my God, my savior, has ransomed me—” Tomlin breaks off here and describes the word ransom “—I was thinking about how you pay a ransom for a slave—” he continues reciting the lyrics: ‘and like a flood, his mercy reigns. Unending love, Amazing Grace.’ And so I wrote that little refrain, and started singing it out to the hymn, never thinking it was going to do anything!

But this addition has endeared and inspired a generation of believers! Praise the Lord!

Wonderful, Merciful Savior by Dawn Rodgers, Eric Wyse

An interview from Christian Music to Eric Wyse:

Eric: I was away on a trip, and when I returned, Dawn showed me a song she was working on that had been birthed in her quiet time. The melody was complete, and most of the first two verses and refrain. We worked together to finish the song, and although I contributed some lyrics, and some “arranging” of the harmonies, the idea and bulk of the song came from Dawn’s pen — and I feel honored to have helped to bring it to fruition.

The first Sunday we sang it at Christ Community, the third verse was not complete (we only had the first line, “Almighty, infinite Father...” and during the sermon I saw Dawn “taking notes”. At the end of the sermon, Scotty asked us to come back and sing that song again, and on the way to the platform, Dawn told me she had just completed the third verse, so she sang it then and it was complete.

Since that time, the song has been sung around the world in churches large and small, with translations in French, German, Hungarian, Russian, Saint Lucian Kweyol, and Spanish. It is both humbling and rewarding to see this simple expression of praise and adoration connect with Christians in so many different cultures and contexts.

See you Sunday!
Blessings, Marty