

O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the Lord is a great God
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for He made it,
and the dry land, which His hands have formed.
O come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture
and the sheep of His hand.

Psalm 95: 1-7

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE, TAKE GREAT JOY
Rev. Daniel Lilienkamp

When I was a young child, my parents brought me and my siblings to the worship service every Sunday. At that time, we alternated weekly between the Order of Holy Communion and the Order of Matins (Morning Prayer). I first learned this Psalm by singing it during that Matins service, albeit in the more poetic, if archaic language of the King James Version. Even then, I recognized that as we were singing the song to the accompaniment of a thundering organ, we were in fact acting out the verse, singing to the Lord, making a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. We were, coming into His presence with thanksgiving and making a joyful noise with a song of praise. How easy it was then to find joy in my faith, knowing what my savior had done for me.

With teenage angst and the pressures of starting a career, it was often hard to maintain that joy. I imagine most of us have experienced this as we began to more and more take our faith for granted. It was easy to let worship become something we just do because we always have, and to let our lives move forward on autopilot.

During my first trip to Papua New Guinea as part of a Companion Synod program in 2014, as I visited our fellow Lutherans in that faraway land, I almost immediately noticed how they took great joy and happiness in their faith. As we celebrated together the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Evangelism School, they came dancing and singing into an open field to present their offerings of thanksgiving. Not as a requirement, but as an act of gratitude. As the proceedings continued the feeling became contagious. I once again felt the stirring of that joy I had felt as a young child.

On each subsequent trip to that beautiful country, I've seen them express that same joy. They are truly a people who recognize what the Good News of Jesus Christ has done for them, and who take great joy in their salvation. May it be true for us also.

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of faith, and our ability to take great joy in it. Teach us to always remember that joy as we remember what Jesus has done for us. Keep us ever mindful of our overseas partners, and that we can learn as much from them as they can learn from us. Amen