

## “God Is My Strength and My Song”

Isaiah 12:2-6

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Each year, we offer an astounding class for adults, known as Nights with Nicodemus. I find that adults, in various stages of their lives, have a hunger to find language for naming their evolving faith. The faith language of their youth no longer reflects the spiritual experiences of their adulthood. So, this class which meets on the first four Sunday nights of January, strives to equip men and women for naming what they now hold to be true. On the final night of the class, we each share the fresh faith statement we have composed. These faith statements always astound me! They are personal. They are authentic. They matter. Adult students come to this class with fear and trembling; but conclude the class with peace and with a deep satisfaction of having found a faith vocabulary that is their own and that names their own experience with the Holy.

As I read through the Isaiah text for today, it struck me that the author had attended a similar class! Isaiah names succinctly and powerfully how he has come to know God. “God is my strength and my song.” That’s the beginning of an awesome faith statement!

“God is my strength and my song.” I found myself nodding my head, saying to myself, ‘yes, I resonate with that.’ Isaiah said it, but the prophet’s words have become my own. With him, I can say with integrity, ‘God is my strength and my song.’ As we light the Advent Candle of Joy, the invitation is to ponder this ancient faith statement to see if it is still relevant to modern people of faith.

“God is my strength.” This statement can only be made by someone who has exhausted his or her own strength and found that God’s strength kicked in at that moment. To use up every ounce of one’s own strength and then to discover a strength beyond one’s own; that is what made Isaiah a believer.

We aren’t told what challenge he faced, whether it was cancer or depression or malaria or some other force set on robbing him of his life. What we do know is that he expended every ounce of energy, every muscle, every drop of perspiration until his own strength was totally spent. Then, God’s strength kicked in. When Isaiah says, “God is my strength,” he is speaking from a place of profound joy.” He may have been a body builder. He may have pumped iron. But his discovery of God came when his human strength had been all used up. For him, it is an indescribable joy to know there is a strength beyond his own, greater than his own, more reliable than his own. He is humbled and empowered at the same time.

Isaiah then says, “God is my song.” I suppose this could mean many things to many people. What a person has to sing about is what brings that person joy. Frank Sinatra’s song was about Old New York. Loretta Lynn’s song was about being a coal miner’s daughter. Willie Nelson’s song is about being on the road again. Beethoven’s song was about a lady name Elise. Whitney Houston’s song is about being in love. Isaiah’s song is about the God who gives him life, life with abundance. It is God who thrills him, God who sends the goose bumps up and down his arms, God who brings him to tears of joy. Thus, his proclamation, “God is my song.”

As we gather on this third Sunday in Advent, my question is: what’s your song? What is it that brings life to your soul? What is it that lets you know you are alive? What’s your song?

In the Christmas story, as the angels find the shepherds out tending their sheep, their song is: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among all with whom God is pleased.” Mary sings, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Zechariah’s song sings, “Blessed be the Lord God, for God has redeemed the people.” Slaves, in our own country, waiting for freedom, sang, “Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.”

Isaiah the prophet said, “God is my song.” What would we say today is our song? What is our passion? What do we have to sing about? If you don’t know what your song is, then you should be registering for Nights with Nicodemus. If you know your song, send it to me. In this way, I will remain in the greatest of hope!  
Amen