

SERMON “Sing, Love, Work” Kristine Johaneck

I am so pleased to be here today, with a chance to sing our favorite hymns together.

Although I’m following the usual lectionary, I chose to take our scripture readings today from “The Message” which is a paraphrase of the Bible, rather than from the NRSVue. We are looking at some big picture thoughts, so this version provided a good way to get that perspective. The Psalm that Don read today, Psalm 149 is one of the last 5 Psalms in the Scriptures, and they all start with a Hallelujah. This particular Psalm takes somewhat of a dark turn at verse 6. In the NRSVue version it struck me actually as violent, and I think that’s because of my own literalist way of dealing with words. Still, once I read through it a few times, looked at different translations, and placed it into a historical context, I saw its application for my own life as ‘ Sing to God, and enjoy praising God and making music, but be ready to also praise God by doing other difficult work - maybe even work that will be dangerous or disagreeable - as well.’

Similarly, the passage I just read from Romans starts off with telling us about the joy of loving each other, and after a summary of the 10 commandments, Paul reminds us that the sum of those commandments is love. He then exhorts his audience to be aware, share the gospel and be ready to work hard!

Throughout scripture, the joys of our relationship with God are paired up with the work we are privileged to do as members of God’s kingdom. And the great thing to remember is that the moments of re-creation through music and dancing and singing as well as the moments of camaraderie and satisfaction and fulfillment of work done well are two sides of the same Christian experience.

We’ve heard a lot about Dolly Parton in the last couple of weeks in light of her passing, and I have noticed that her music and talent are the first things that are mentioned in the media, but then the conversation turns to her kindness, and her tireless work to bring literacy to all children through her Imagination Library. It’s not just the talent we remember, but we remember a beautiful soul who worked hard to help others.

So, this week, we are carving out some time to share the joy of singing our favorite music, selected by you. Tomorrow will be Labor Day - a day to spend a little extra time with the ones you love and to remember and celebrate workers throughout our country. Then, well, then it’ll be Tuesday, time to get back to work, refreshed and rested and ready to live the lives we have been blessed with by God.