

HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 8/30/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 31 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, continue pray for the many places in the world that are in need of God's presence. Add to your prayers those who are being affected by the storms and hurricanes in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and the southern and eastern seaboard. Ask God bring peace and mercy to all who are in need and to provide faithful workers to bring God's comfort.*

Clapping hands has recently become more of a thing in our congregation. We now clap after each musical performance and, on occasion, some will clap along with a piece of music. For some, this just doesn't feel right. Church is supposed to have reverence and a sense of decorum, and clapping just doesn't fit that. For others, it is a way of expressing joy as a result of or even as a part of worship.

Let me share a few thoughts.

Our hands are the first musical instrument any of us receive. Even before we gain control over our voices to be able to speak and to sing, we can clap. But we don't often think of our hands as a musical instrument. Yet it can be a way of joining in with the praise that we, as a congregation, offer to God. Our rhythmic clapping can enhance our adoration of God. Psalm 47:1 even encourages, "*Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.*" And, for those who are not blessed with good singing voices, clapping hands provides an alternate way of participating in offering joyful praise to God. (Though the pandemic prevents us from doing so right now, I believe everyone should sing loudly in worship. If you have a good voice, sing loudly to praise God for giving you a good voice. If you have a bad voice, sing loudly to make God sorry for giving you a bad voice.)

Clapping after a performance also has its value in worship. Though, for many, clapping is a way of appreciating the musical gifts of choirs and singers and instrumentalists, we do not worship to be entertained. So, though we indeed are thankful and grateful for those who share God's gift of music, it might be more valuable to think of our applause as directed toward God, rather than the musicians. Again, following Psalm 47, we can applaud to praise God for the gifts musicians and the messages contained in the songs. Applause can be another way to show our love for God.

Such responses are not for everyone. Individual piety may lead some to feel uncomfortable with offerings such as these. But for others, they are indeed offerings given as an expression of faith in and love for God. If it's not your thing, that's fine. Still, we can also find joy in observing these expressions of praise made by others in worship.

How we worship has changed over the centuries. Partly this is due to the development of different musical instruments; partly it is due to changes in how we view the act of

worship. But I think one of the best descriptions of worship and the various ways of worshiping comes from Psalm 150:

- ¹ Praise the Lord.
Praise God in His sanctuary;
praise Him in His mighty heavens.
- ² Praise Him for His acts of power;
praise Him for His surpassing greatness.
- ³ Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise Him with the harp and lyre,
- ⁴ praise Him with timbrel and dancing,
praise Him with the strings and pipe,
- ⁵ praise Him with the clash of cymbals,
praise Him with resounding cymbals.
- ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey