

“He who sings prays twice” St Augustine or/and Martin Luther

2. Chronicles 5, 1-14

2 Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Zion, the City of David. **3** And all the Israelites came together to the king at the time of the festival in the seventh month. **4** When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites took up the ark,

5 and they brought up the ark and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The Levitical priests carried them up; **6** and King

Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. **7** The priests then brought the ark of the LORD’s covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. **8** The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and covered the ark and its carrying poles. **9** These poles were so long that their ends, extending from the ark, could be seen from in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. **10** There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt. **11** The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. **12** All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. **13** The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: “He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, **14** and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.



Today's Sunday is called Cantata. That means "Sing!" And in the text above we see an example of how the people of Israel could sing. I would first like to describe the situation there: Solomon had just finished building the temple. The most important thing in the temple was the 10 commandments. This is so because the 10 commandments were the Faultline and connection between God and His people. Now after the completion of the temple, these were solemnly brought to the Holy of Holies. The 10 commandments would be there as a source of strength and orientation for the people of God. God himself was at the place where the 10 commandments were. And when the people gathered around God, they were sanctified by the HOLY presence of God in the Temple. The text we just heard tells of the event when this temple was finished and was now consecrated. In such a special situation you just have to sing! The Bible says that the priests sang in one voice! Singing was then and still is an important part of the Christian service today. When we read the Book of Psalms, we actually see the Song Book of the People of Israel. The Gospels tell us that Jesus also sang. Probably most of the time from this book of psalms. For example, right after he instituted Holy

Communion. Also in heaven the Angels sing. And that is why the people of Israel just had to sing, when the Temple was consecrated. ... Only today and in these times of Corona this Sunday cantata "Sing", does not seem fitting and we are not in the mood to sing at all. Here we are in church wearing Masks! Some say that they cannot sing with the mask at all. In some other congregations, people stop singing because it is believed that the risk of infection with the Corona virus is particularly dangerous when singing. So thus is the situation on today's Sunday, which is called Sing!

I want to encourage you to sing anyway! Even with the mask, or even if it's only with a very low voice ... Or even if it's only in silence. I want to encourage you to do this, because singing is more than just finding the right tone! Singing has something to do with the inner attitude. Singing has something to do with our faith. "Who sings prays twice" Martin Luther once said. And that is exactly the meaning of the singing of the people of Israel at that time. And so the meaning of singing for us today is also the same. He who sings prays twice! But how do you pray twice? When I pray, I have a specific concern that I put to God. That means I have a thought that moves me. Maybe even a great need and I want to call to God for help when I pray. But it may also be that I am simply very grateful for what God has done to me ... and pray. When I sing, there is prayer... and more. When I sing, I don't want to sing only with words, but with more than words! My whole body is put in the service of prayer. I breathe deeper and the sound that comes from my mouth is more than a thought. The sound covers and includes my whole person..body and soul .. My emotions are there too! Then when I sing with other people, there is something added on top of that!: When I sing with others, I have to coordinate with the other people. I have to be in harmony with the others. Starting with which song and which melody we sing. Then I have to pay attention to the others when I sing. I can't just sing as I please, I have to listen to the others. I cannot sing without finding common ground with other people. Without this communality singing is no more than a conglomerate of sounds..And not good to listen to at all! When I get involved with another person and attune myself with him, the heart widens and we feel togetherness, comfort and strength. If we look at singing in this way, it is an example of Christian life in general. I have to get involved in Christian life, just like when I am singing ... I have to find a common tone ... I have to pay attention to the others ... and I cannot form the whole choir on my own, but have to connect with other different people, so that a wonderful melody comes from the whole choir. Just like the church itself! We feel oneness! We are on the same road! When the people of Israel sang in front of the temple, it is said that they all sang in one voice! What a wonderful feeling when thousands of people find the right tone together! And they are one! But there was one more thing. The whole community of Israel was focused on the center. They looked at the Holy of Holies! Their entire attention was fixed on God! They looked at the place where the 10 commandments were. They looked at the place where God was! And then the trumpets sounded! We have to know that in Israel at the time, trumpets weren't musical instruments at all. They only served to announce something. Or to warn people when there is imminent danger. They were also used in a similar way as our church bells today and were able to announce the beginning of the service. The trumpets in front of the Solomon Temple were allowed to announce where God was to be found. They were like evangelists who cried out: Look! There is your God! The trumpets in Israel at that time show us that our singing has a goal. Our singing is not just for our well-being. Our singing is geared towards God. And when the people sang at the time: "He is kind and his mercy lasts forever", the house was filled with a cloud and everyone knew that God himself was now among them.

During these corona times there were many worship services on the Internet ... And I noticed that the temptation is great to just hear the sermon of such a service and to skip the songs. As if the most important thing in worship was the sermon alone. But that is a misunderstanding. The sermon should only proclaim God and his salvation through Jesus Christ like the trumpet did in the Old Testament. And then we gather as a whole church and sing to our God with all our hearts. This is the meeting

place of God and His people ... Even in these times of the Corona. And as we do that, the angels sing along in heaven. They don't wear masks. You are also not afraid to get too close to one another. They are prophets who remind us of the time when we will see God face to face without mask or separation. Amen.