

Making music: Psalm 149.1-4



Praise the Lord.
Sing to the Lord a new song;
his praise in the assembly of his faithful people.
Let Israel rejoice in his maker;
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.
Let them praise his name with dancing;
And make music to him with timbrel and harp.
For the Lord takes delight in his people;
He crowns the humble with victory. (Psalm 149.1-4)



There's something about children and music that just brings a smile.

I love the story of the visitor who was staying at a grand, old-fashioned hotel in the Swiss Alps. There was a piano in the hallway, and a small child used to bang away cheerfully on the keys, making a joyful — though not very tuneful — clatter which used to annoy some of the more sensitive guests. One day, the visitor heard something rather beautiful coming from the hallway. She looked down, and there was the child banging away — and an old man playing with him, turning the cacophony into beautiful music. She asked the maid, “Who is that?” Oh, she was told, there was a famous composer staying there for a rest, who liked to play the piano too. He turned the joyful clatter into beautiful music, not by hushing the noise but by enjoying it and sharing in the child's delight.



I think that's a good way to think about how God delights in us — and turns our rather feeble and selfish attempts at prayer into beautiful music. As St Paul says, this is the work of God's Holy Spirit: *The Spirit helps us in our infirmities; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with sighs too deep for words.* (Romans 8.26)

Today's psalm calls us to *praise, sing, rejoice, be glad, make music* because God *takes delight* in us and *crowns the humble with victory*. What does this mean? First, that God can still see the pattern of created beauty in us despite the cracks. Second, that he delights in loving us. Third, that he wills to set right all that is wrong in us. What a God!



God acts towards us in extraordinarily grace-filled and merciful ways. As Jos Moons says in *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, 'God does not set entrance exams!'

This is a prayer invitation for us to think of the people we love and pray for, to celebrate them in God's presence as beloved and redeemed children. Even when we don't know how to pray for them, we bless God for his delight in them and ask that the door of their hearts might be opened to that love. It may be that this is the most important prayer you ever pray for your friend, opening their hearts to a God who is able to bring them home and keep them safe.

Come, Holy Spirit, take my prayers and use them for your purposes. Help ... and all those whom I love to discover your delight in them.