

A Song of Unity



Recently I attended an online Alpha program. I was impressed by the fact that we could participate on a Zoom platform for something as personal as the Alpha program, but it was very good. However, that isn't what I want to write about today. At the end of the course one of our facilitators sent us a clip of a song as a blessing. I clicked onto the link to find the title: The Blessing Australia. I watched the clip and thought WOW! What a beautiful and powerful song. But the most impressive part was the fact that 300 Christian churches were very involved ecumenically in putting this song together in a Zoom format!

I am not an evangelical charismatic prayer at all, but while listening to this song I found myself lifting my hands in prayer and worship (in the privacy of my bedroom) with the best of the charismatics and feeling slightly overcome with emotion. So what is it about this particular song? The words come from an ancient Hebrew prayer from the Book of Numbers. I am sure you are familiar with it:

*"The Lord bless and keep you,
The Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace."*

This was followed by a repetitive Amen as a chorus.

This is such a beautiful piece of Scripture, but it's what came next that really moved me.

*"May his favour be upon you
and a thousand generations,
and your family, and your children,
and their children and their children."*

This phrase was repeated several times as if to emphasise our global anxiety for the future wellbeing of our children and theirs to come. It struck a deep chord of anguish within me and caused my tears to flow. I was suddenly struck with how hard and sad a time 2020 has been for us to live through. Our disconnection from loved ones, families that have lost loved ones, insecurity with jobs, lives turned upside down, loneliness, tragedy, the disorienting reality of a "new normal", the world seems mad and politics dangerously unbalanced. The anxiety around global warming, the list goes on and on. There is so much that divides us in this world. So much mistrust among us, so much that seems broken and defective. Where is the hope for the future?

Getting back to the song, the next part is a call for peace, for hope, for the love of God to surround us and keep us safe. The words that followed were:

*“May His presence go before you
and behind you and beside you
all around you and within you
He is with you, He is with you.*

*In the morning, in the evening,
in your coming, and your going,
in your weeping and rejoicing.
He is for you, He is for you...*

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen...

God *is* for you!

In the face of everything we have been through this year it would be understandable if some people felt that God had abandoned us to our dysfunctional end. With our disregard for the planet, and our failing to be the stewards of the earth, that God created so magnificently, we could be forgiven for falling into despair and believing that we deserve to see it all fall apart. **But that is not our God!** Our God is a God of mercy and compassion, of forgiveness and healing. Is God calling us to hold on, to trust, to believe that all is not lost, that we can (if we have the will to do so) change the world?

This song has started a movement, God’s people are crying out for blessing. Is this the work of the Holy Spirit moving within us, to show us our connection and dependence on God’s mercy and love, and our connection and dependence on each other for survival. We all desire the same outcomes; for our families to live, to thrive, to be well and prosperous and to be blessed by God. In spite of what is happening around us, we are called to be a Eucharistic people, a generous, caring, loving, and most of all, a grateful community of God’s people. To believe first and foremost in the goodness of people! There is hope, there is always hope.

This song as a “stand alone” song is impressive, but the really Good News is that it has gone global! And when I say global, I mean GLOBAL! From its first performance in America by the Evangelical Church at Elevation Worship, it has now been recorded by choirs around the world. Not only have Christians recorded it but also the Jewish community and the Muslim community as well. Here is a list of the countries that have recorded it so far:

The USA, Armenia, Australia, Burma, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Dubai, France, Ghana, India, Israel, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Spain, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, United Kingdom, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Zimbabwe and the Middle East. (The Arab world blessing features singers from 16 Arab speaking countries in the Middle East, North Africa, The Arabian Peninsula, Egypt and South Sudan!) Each day I am finding more.

Praise God! What is going on here? A global movement of unity? What does it mean for us as the People of God? Have we found in this one song something that unites us? Hundreds of Christians from all denominations united in song calling for a blessing on all nations, on all people. Not just Christians singing in one voice, but Muslim and Jewish people as well. Why

is this not all over the news? This is something to give thanks for and to pray with. Wherever we perceive enemies let us remember too that across the globe, in every country, we have brothers and sisters in Christ. We have brothers and sisters in other faiths as well. We are all God's children. I can't help wondering, if a song can unite the world what else might be possible?

Please follow the link to hear the "The Blessing Australia" and spread the Good News!

Ps: I warn you, if you start following the links to other recording you will spend a lot of time listening to this song. My recommendations are the Irish, Australian, NZ, and U.K. versions, though I loved the Jewish, Indian and Arab and Armenian versions as well.

The Lord bless you, and keep you.
Make His face shine upon
and be gracious to you.
The Lord turn His, face toward you
And give you Peace

Shalom.