

# Lifting our Hands in Worship

*By Dave Frincke*

The thing that I appreciate most about the Lutheran Church is that we hold tightly to the Word of God. The Word is our anchor. The Word is our foundation. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. In a time when many churches are re-forming the Word to line up with their beliefs, we still hold fast to the ideal that we should be re-forming our beliefs to line up with the Word.

Lately I've been studying the different expressions of worship that our found in the book of Psalms. Here are just a couple of the things that I have found. In 90 different verses, the Psalmist talks about singing as an expression of worship; 19 verses talk about making music; 8 different verses talk about standing and 1 verse talks about kneeling. These 4 expressions are rich in meaning and grounded in Scripture. That's why you can walk into most worship services and find people singing, hear different kinds of music and see people standing and kneeling at different times during the service.

But these aren't the only 4 expressions of worship that are talked about in the book of Psalms, there are many others. One of them is lifting our hands. This expression is talked about 7 times throughout the Psalms. Here are just a few of the references:

- *I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. – Psalm 63:4*
- *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD. – Psalm 134:2*
- *May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. – Psalm 141:2*
- *I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. – Psalm 143:6*

It's interesting that something so grounded in Scripture can be such a tender subject when talked about in regards to our worship services. I've never been in a conversation when the validity of singing, standing or kneeling in worship was brought into question. But when the topic of lifting our hands is brought up, I've found that some people tend to get uncomfortable, upset & even angry.

Why is this? I think many of us tend to automatically link the expression of lifting our hands with contemporary worship styles. But this expression was not created by a denomination or patented by the Charismatic or Pentecostal movement. It was practiced and affirmed as a valid expression of worship as early as the book of Psalms. Lifting our hands is a beautiful act of worship that is rich in meaning. It can be used in any worship setting because, just like singing & kneeling, it is grounded in Scripture.

It's important that we don't let our own feelings dictate our judgments. Some people may feel uncomfortable in a setting where others are lifting their hands in worship. But that person shouldn't let their feelings judge the validity of someone else's worship. It's also important that we don't let our traditions dictate our judgments. Some people have never been in a church where lifting your hands was practiced. But not having experienced something doesn't make it invalid. We should not judge people, churches or denominations based on what people do or don't do when they worship.

The expressions that are found in the Psalms are not confined to any style. Whether we worship in a traditional setting or a contemporary one, we should feel free to join with the Psalmists in their expressions of worship. I think God is honored & blessed when, along with our sermons & songs, our worship expressions come straight from His Word.