

In 1962, a nuclear disaster was as close as the press of a red button—one single red button! A Russian submarine was patrolling along the Florida coast and the captain began preparing to nuke three American cities! Had it not been for the calm of a clear-thinking Russian officer, WW III might have begun in 1962.

The officer's name? Vasili Arkhipov. Back in the day, Soviet subs were designed for cold water, not the warm water off the Florida coast. Temperatures reached 120 degrees Fahrenheit inside the Russian sub. As it patrolled near the Florida coast, the men were exhausted and on edge. Finally, the captain lost his cool. He issued the order to launch three nuclear missiles—T-minus three minutes and counting!

Just then, Vasili Arkhipov asked the captain to reconsider. The captain listened. His anger cooled. The Soviet sub went back home! Authorities kept this incredible brush with WW III secret for decades. It wasn't until 2002 that the public learned of Vasili Arkhipov's heroic stand.

Why does this matter? After all, we won't ever spend three weeks in a sweltering Russian submarine. We may spend hours taking care of a friend or family member. We may fight the headwinds of a financial downturn. We may spend night after night at the bedside of a sick child or a dying parent. We may fight to keep our family together or our business from going under.

And we will be tempted to press the red button and launch—not nuclear warheads—but angry outbursts, rash accusations, a hateful retaliation of ugly words. Sometimes, we just want to let them have it—and deal with the consequences later.

What do we do when the temperature is up, our defenses are down, and we want to go nuclear? How can we keep our finger from pressing the red button? How can we keep our heads when everyone else is losing theirs? Walk to the Mt. of Olives. What? That's what I said, walk to the Mt. of Olives.

We're in a series called Places of the Passion. Today we walk with Jesus to the Mt. of Olives. At the Mt. of Olives, Jesus teaches us to sing. Sing? Yes, sing! Singing is a whole lot better than sobbing, sighing, feeling sorry for myself, then pushing the red button!

Sing because of God's power. "Singing a hymn they went out to the Mt. of Olives." (Matthew 26:30) Imagine that! Everything and everyone is about to go nuclear and Jesus sings Psalms 113–118—the Egyptian Hallel. Hallel means "praise!" These psalms praise God for his power that delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery.

Here are some verses that Jesus and his disciples sang. Psalm 113:7, "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap." Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in the heavens; he does everything he pleases." Psalm 116:8, "The Lord has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling." Psalm 118:22–24, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." When your world looks like the darkness of the Mt. of Olives—sing because of God's power!

Christ is about to be betrayed by a kiss. Then, in staccato-like fashion, there will be deniers and slappers and beaters and spitters and whippers and mockers. And there will be nailers. So what does Jesus do? Jesus sings! Jesus sings because of God's power. Psalm 118:17—one of the psalms in the Egyptian Hallel—"I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord!"

Instructive are the events in 2 Chronicles 20. In this chapter, Jehoshaphat gains a great victory over the Ammonites, Edomites and Moabites. How does he do it? 2 Chronicles 20:21 tells us, "Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, singing: 'Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever!'" Sing because of God's power—God's power brings victory!

Here Psalm 149:6 comes up huge: "The praises of God are in their mouths like a double-edged sword in their hands." When the praises of God are in our mouths, they—like double-edged swords—silence our sobbing, sighing and feeling sorry for ourselves. When biblical truth is set to music, it becomes memorable, teachable and transformational! When the heat is on and the stress is up, sing—sing hymns and songs. Sing because of God's power!

Sing because of God's promise. "Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.'" (Matthew 26:31–32) Immanent disaster is right around the corner—but there is also Galilee! Galilee! Galilee is where Christ begins his ministry. Galilee is where Christ continues his ministry! When will that be? After his resurrection! Matthew 28:10 states, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'"

When everything looks dark and bleak and you're tempted to go nuclear—sing because of God's promise! Why do that? Because the end is not the end. I'll say that again. The end is not the end. With Jesus Christ, the end is never the end! There is death but there is also resurrection! There is Golgotha but there is also Galilee!

That VISA bill is not the end. That diagnosis is not the end. That impossible situation is not the end. That depression stalking and mocking you is not the end. Christ always brings a new beginning—always! Sing! Sing because of God's promise! Galilee!

Sing because of God's pardon. "Peter answered him, 'Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.'" (Matthew 26:33) Peter will not only fall away, he will deny Jesus three times. And the third time Peter will do it with a curse!

On Easter morning, an angel tells the women, "Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he said." (Mark 16:7) Peter! Peter, who denied the Master three times! Peter, who caved in under pressure! Peter, the rock who broke into pieces—right when Jesus needed him most. Peter! "Go, tell his disciples and Peter!"

Sing because of God's pardon for Peter. Sing because God's pardon for parents. Sing because of God's pardon for partners and peers and even pastors. Sing because of God's pardon for all people! We cannot out-sin the grace of God! We cannot out-sin the grace of

God! God's grace? "Signed when our Redeemer died. Sealed when he was glorified!"

Growing up, a son's job was to mow his family's lawn. His family's lawnmowers, though, weren't very fancy—they were just a step above garage-sale junk. One day, he couldn't start the mower. He kept pulling the chord and sweating! Pulling the chord and sweating!

His father appeared and said, "You're not using all your strength." "What?" The son blurted out. "You're not using all your strength." "What do you mean?" His dad said, "You haven't asked me to help you." Did I tell you that this father played football in high school and in college? That this father had bulging biceps? That this father was stronger than an ox?

Give your stress to your heavenly Father. Ask him to help. You don't have to pull and sweat alone! That's what Jesus teaches at the Mt. of Olives. And that's why we sing!

When things go south in the waiting room, the living room, the boardroom, the classroom, the conference room or the emergency room, don't go nuclear! Don't sing your old song—woe is me! Poor me! What about me? Look at messy, miserable me! Instead, "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!" Amen.