

Call and Response

Scripture Reading — Nehemiah 12:24-26

The leaders of the Levites ... and their associates ... stood opposite them to give praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other.

—Nehemiah 12:24 —

I grew up in the African American church, and we often sang songs that used a call-and-response style. Different musicians used two different choruses, creating a musical conversation between them.

Nehemiah shows us a picture of call-and-response singing among the Israelites. Today's chapter contains a long list of priests and Levites. The priests helped the people bridge their relationship with God. The Levites were the worship leaders in the temple. These groups instructed the people to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Imagine these groups standing across from one another. There were no songbooks, no iTunes to download. They sang the psalms of David from memory back and forth to each other, their music an offering to God. They praised him for bringing them to Jerusalem by his power alone. They shouted praise songs of thanksgiving that outdid any vocal concert we would hear today. The worship of the one true God was exactly what Israel was created to do.

We were made to worship. Worship pulls us into the large and spacious world of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worship goes on in heaven continuously, honoring the Lamb who was slain for our salvation. Let's join the heavenly choir by singing praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Make a joyful sound to the Lord!

Prayer

"I will sing of my Redeemer and his wondrous love to me." I will join in singing praise and thanksgiving to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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