

TWO HANDS CLAPPING

Haven House
March 200

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Scripture:

Let the people clap, God has Ps. 47

God will judge with equity Ps. 98

My word goes out and does not return to me empty --Isa. 55:8-13

A recently popular book is entitled "The Sound of One Hand Clapping." Quite a catchy title for a book but hardly congruent with what we know about hands and sounds and clapping. Think, though, of the act of two hands clapping. Scripture seems to have several things to say to us concerning this universal phenomenon.

Creator God makes the world and gives power to the rocks and hills, thunder and floods--and of course, man, to clap in celebration. Throughout the life of Jesus we see examples of God clapping his own hands, not with the sound that we make, but in a different way.

The Nativity is greeted with a flurry of angels, winging to earth and proclaiming peace, good will. A great applause from God. At the Baptism God himself speaks audibly, "This is my beloved son. In him I am well pleased." At the Transfiguration again, "This is my beloved. Listen to him." And the angel at the empty tomb proclaims the Resurrection, "He is not here. He is risen."

God is applauding for us just as he does for Jesus--proclaiming peace and good will to us, affirming his pleasure in us, calling us his beloved. It is God's way of clapping his hands--silently if we compare his to what our hands can produce but loudly if we but have ears to listen to his reveling in us. God rejoiced at our birth, yearns for us to experience our baptism in his Spirit that we might know the pleasure he takes in us, and intends for us to have a resurrection experience in this life, where the old man dies and the new, original godly man emerges.

Each spring nature claps its hands in new beauty, as if God claps his hands each year and says again, "Be!" and another spring comes forth. Your counselors are clapping their hands silently as they verbally tell you what a worthwhile person you are and what potential you have for a happy and creative life. Isaiah's word rings in our ears--God's word--his energy--is actively working in us to bring us to new relationship with him.

Nature arises clapping each spring - no matter what!! Regardless of ice storms, hurricanes, fire, flood, drought. Each time you come to Haven House you heard again from those who minister to you the good news of who you are. And each time you listen with the inner ear rather than the outer ear, you can hear within you the clapping--be it ever so faint--of a life force that wills you to know your worth.

Though Genesis doesn't say so, I imagine God clapped his hands with delight at the end of the

sixth day of Creation and every day previously as he pronounced what he had created "Good." He created us to do the same thing. Hand clapping is one thing we do best--no training, no practice necessary. It is one of the first things a tiny child learns. Almost instinctively the child knows that clapping means good.

Hand clapping is a great image, great metaphor. It is always positive! No one claps hands in displeasure. So clap for each other here, not with two hands together but with listening, encouraging, openness, acceptance, all the ways you can applaud each other. And clap for yourselves--for beauty in you that is as wonderful as the blooming dogwood, for wholeness that wants to shine forth, for holiness that wants to resurrect you, recreate you.

And God bless you all with gifts you have never before received.