

SING WITH JOY



**"I will thank you, Lord, in front of all the people.
I will sing your praises among the nations. For your unfailing
love is as high as the heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds." (Psalm 57:9-10)**

In 1988, Arlene Limas shocked the world.

Arlene was a member of the United States' Olympic tae kwon do team. She was the U.S. national welterweight champion, but she wasn't a gold medal favorite. In fact, she wasn't a favorite for a medal at all. But she surprised everyone by moving through the preliminaries into the medal round. There she won a chance to compete for the gold medal. And that's when she shocked the world -- at least the tae kwon do world. She won.

An underdog to even get to the medal round, and the gold medal was hers. And she got to experience every Olympic athlete's dream: to stand on the highest platform, have a gold medal placed around your neck, see your country's flag raised high, and hear your national anthem.

She climbed onto the platform. The medal was draped ceremoniously around her neck. The Stars and Stripes was hoisted above the flags of her competitors' countries. Swallowing the lump in her throat, she put her hand over her heart and waited for the familiar notes of "The Star-Spangled Banner".

And she waited. And she waited.

After an uncomfortable silence, it became apparent to Arlene that something was wrong. The song wasn't playing. She smiled nervously, thinking that the music would start any second. Nope. Seconds slipped by, and still no national anthem. Finally, after a long wait, the song started. But not from the speakers overhead. The music was coming from Arlene's lips.

"Oh, say can you see...?" she began. As she did, she started waving her arms, coaxing the spectators at the ceremony to join her. Of course, they did. Every American there, and even some non-Americans who happened to know the words, joined Arlene in an impromptu a cappella rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner". By the end, their voices were rolling through the building, echoing off the walls, soaring to the ceiling. Tears spilled down Arlene's cheeks. Very few eyes in the crowd were dry, either. And no Olympic medal ceremony has ever been more moving. All because Arlene sang.

"I will waken the dawn with my song," David once promised to God (Psalm 57:8). "I will sing your praises among the nations." According to tradition, he was hiding in a cave at the time, running for his life from Saul, a jealous madman who wanted him dead. Maybe looking out of the mouth of the cave at the darkness, thinking of his enemy hiding in that darkness, waiting for his chance, David looked ahead to the dawn. He knew God could be trusted. He knew God's unfailing love and faithfulness. And he looked forward to the day when he would stand in front of God's assembled people, lift his voice to the skies and sing a song of joy, celebrating his deliverance.

Sing. Hasn't God been good to you? Haven't you tasted of His unfailing love and faithfulness? Hasn't He shown you time and time again that He can be trusted? Then sing. Let your voice soar above the crowd. **Raise a song to heaven in praise to God. Oh, actual singing isn't mandatory. You can do it with your words. With your writing. With your enthusiasm. With your love and service. With your patience. With your contentment. With your peace. Doesn't really matter what form your "song" takes, what key it's in, or how skillful it is. What matters is that you sing.**

And if you're focused on the goodness of God, you will. Lives that "sing" are born from experiencing God's love and faithfulness -- which we all have. We've all seen that He loves us. We've all experienced His blessings, His guidance, His providence and His grace. We've all been given His greatest gift of love, sealed with His Son's blood. If our lives don't sing with joy, it's because we haven't given Him credit. It's because in worrying about the things we don't have and the circumstances that aren't right and the enemies who plot our destruction, we've become distracted. Our songs will return when we remember what God has been for us in the past, when we're thankful what He does for us today, and when we look forward with joy to His continued unfailing love and faithfulness tomorrow -- and into eternity.

Sing. There is a crowd of people all around you, every day, literally dying to hear someone sing. They're lonely. They're hurting. They're full of bitterness and anger. They're plagued with self-loathing, enslaved by sin, and tormented by fear. When you sing, they will too. Something in your song will strike a chord deep within them. They will recognize in your song something that seems oddly familiar to them. They will hear of a God who hurts with them, can heal them, and forgives them - - and of His Son who came to earth and died to prove it. And this God, who until you sang might have been unknown or an irrelevant, stained-glass icon, will suddenly become enfolded to them in your life and experience.

Sing. Sing boldly, confidently, and joyfully. Sing with joy like Arelene, from a heart bubbling over with gratitude and with determination to break the silence and welcome the celebration. Sing among the nations, wherever you are. There are many voices waiting to join in.