

The Gift of Music

By Rev. Todd Farnsworth

Ephesians 5: 15-20

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15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, 20 always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Later today I expect that I will hear from my kids. The phone will ring and I'll hear one of them singing: *I just called to say, I love you...I just called to say I really care.*

Or, F is for the funny ways you loved me.

A is for you Always loved me.

T is for the Taters that you gave me.

H is for the happiness you gave me.

E is for the...well you get the picture.

Or I'll hear: *I feel lovvvve lovvee lovvvvvvvvvvvvvve. I feel lovee, loveee, lovvvve, loveee.*

Despite my kids having no knowledge of what I'm preaching on today, they get the gift of music. We use it all the time to communicate with one another. Our conversations often end up being a string of songs we have enjoyed together through the years.

They understand the power that the author of Ephesians was pointing his readers to in today's lesson:

***18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, **20** always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*

The author (who may or may not have been Paul) wanted to unite the early church. His letter (which is considered one of the earliest "circular letters" because it is not written to a particular church) seeks to bring people together through their common knowledge of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. He understood that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians would have these things in common and if they spoke to one another out of that language, there would be an understanding among them. He may have also been aware, as we are today, that a tune or melody can bring people together as the notes wash over us and get our bodies vibrating at a common frequency.

Try it. Ommmmm....match my ommm and feel it in your body.

It's kind of cool.

So on this Sunday where we celebrate the music ministry of our church, it's appropriate to think about the ways in which music unites us to sacred stuff.

I confess that I do not read music...so that can alienate me a little. I can, however, listen to music, and appreciate music, and if I understand a little about what I am listening to, I can start to resonate with the people who are playing or singing the music.

George Frederic Handel wanted to build those kinds of spiritual bridges for his listeners. Besides his glorious *Messiah* (which we sing in December and on Easter) he wrote musical theater based on Bible stories like Esther and, Deborah. Unfortunately, or fortunately, as he turned his attention to the story of Samson from the Book of Judges, the Bishop of London decreed that biblical stories were off limits for theatrical productions.

Seeing the power of redemption in Samson's story, Handel was undeterred. He wanted to share that theme with his audience and so he wrote the action into songs sung by a chorus (as he had done with Esther) and created an *oratorio*, a piece of which our choir will sing during the Offering this morning.

So we may be united in spirit, I will share with you that the piece the choir will sing today is from the end of Samson. It is a song of celebration for the redeemed hero who has sacrificed himself so that God and Israel may be honored before the gods of the Philistines. As you listen to Fimi play and the choir sing, seek the connection that Handel was trying to make with his audience.

The late 20th century prophet Madonna once wrote: *music, makes the people, come together...yeah.*

I'm not sure if she is a big reader of the Letter to Ephesians, but let's take their advice: *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart. While you are listening to*

whatever music you enjoy this summer, let the notes and the words wash over you and sink in. if you find a song that's melody or words move you to think of Jesus or God or the Holy Spirit, share it with us. Send in the title and who performs it, and we'll create a [BCC Playlist in the Friday Blast](#).

The early church had a much more limited playlist to choose from, so let's take advantage of the wide variety of music out there, and find unity in the diversity of music we listen to. Let's make use of the gift of music that our choir blesses us with. May they springboard us into a summer of exploration as they take a well deserved break from rehearsals and offering their gifts Sunday after Sunday. I am grateful for their leadership among us in finding those unifying chords.

Perhaps Fimi would be willing to speak to some of the specific gifts that we have been graced with this past year....

Thank you, Fimi. Thank you choir.

During the summer months let us take time to listen to the words and discover the meaning behind the melodies we enjoy. Let us speak to each other in music through our Friday Blast and face to face. May we discover where God is calling us together through the notes that linger in our minds and the words that stir our soul. Stay connected with music, in Jesus' name. Amen.