

Church Music

Rec

prayer

I`d like to have a little bit of fun with today`s sermon. I want to teach using what was, in Jesus day, called the fifth gospel. An ancient historian from the fourth century named Eusibus called the land of Israel the fifth gospel. He did this because the tradition of the day was for the teachers, Jesus included to draw analogies to describe in concrete terms what they were saying. How many people love music?

Without denigrating others choices in music, I would like first of all to state that music is like a chocolate bar, it is always best if we through away the wrapper before enjoying it...

Let me show you what I mean... the Trinity is a mystery and it is almost impossible to describe with analogy without creating some heresy or other, but we can use analogy to gain a better understanding of it and other aspects of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Trinity always acts in one accord. No, that doesn`t mean that we jam God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus into one Honda... It means that they never have opposing positions their will is always aligned. While it is true I first thought of a Honda when I heard accord. I next thought of a chord as a rope which binds together. I then thought of a chord of wood which it used to generate warmth and comfort in the home. I then thought of an accord between nations or individuals as a mechanism of peace. I then thought of a musical chord. Each note has its distinctive personality and each when played forms a chord that is in harmony.

Stay with me...

No, I wasn`t on a pun-tastic adventure, I realized that I was reaching for the fifth Gospel, a way of understanding God in my frame of reference.

Remember when Jesus said things like the he does in Luke 13:18:

He said, therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the sky nested in its branches." Jesus himself used parable and simile to describe the kingdom.

Since he is our example, I may not be off my rocker... entirely... this morning.

Today I ask us to consider that a piano is like a church.

It has a tremendous history; it has been here for a long time. Occasionally it has needed a tuning up, but it has a defined purpose - it makes beautiful music.

Next consider that there is a score on the music stand which is the song that will be played. There is a piano player who will set the timing of the music, put the artistic flavour on the music; choose the notes and voice-ings that will be used. The piano player will choose how loud or softly the piano is played. It is the skill of the piano player that causes the music to burst forth from the piano and touch the hearts of those listening.

Consider that every person here this morning is one of the keys on the keyboard of the piano.

Missing keys - Example in scale

If you are missing...

Then the song is compromised

It is more difficult for the piano player to create certain chords

The music doesn't sound quite right

Now if you are present...

The music is beautiful

When you are used is in the hands of the piano player

How you are used has a divine purpose

What if you are an Eb key and you want to be a C...

Well... you could probably get away with being a d# but that's about it...

If you jump in and pretend you are a C it might work, but more often than not the chord in the music doesn't sound quite right. God created the Eb because he needs and loves the Eb just as it is. It may need tuning from time to time, but it is right where he needs it and does exactly what is required. You are a single note, but how you work in unity with the other notes creates beautiful music.

The piano doesn't need two C's that are exactly the same. God has created each note with its own special gifts and talents.

What if the key is sticky and resistant to the piano player? It may throw off a small amount of the beauty of the peace, but the piano player will not

compromise the song, he will use another voicing and return to fix the key later. The key will have missed out on its part.

The keys work together to form chords...

Example of Chord, minor Chord, 7th etc.

Example of total discord

Chords work best when they are put together by the skill of the piano player in his timing. It is true that a single note will play from time to time but yet the music takes on a fuller and richer more meaningful tone when notes are in harmony and they play together.

Consider the piano player...

The piano player wants to make beautiful music. He wants to inhabit the music. The music is an expression of the artist. The piano is the tool by which each individual note resounds and beautiful music resounds forth, touches the hearts of men and women and draws them closer, because they want to hear the beautiful music.

It is the desire of the piano player to lovingly shape and utilize each note in his great purpose of creating the music. He wants the song to touch as many as possible. The music is a true expression of himself and so he shares himself with those around.

Consider the Audience...

Not everyone will like his music. Some may say that they don't have the time to listen; others may say that it's not for them. Some will attend the performance, others will not. The piano player has freely extended the invitation that all may attend. The artist will not interfere with the choices of those who do not wish to listen. He will not sacrifice the song, for those who will not attend, but he will play on with the hope that those who choose not to attend will be touched and drawn back to the song. It is the purpose of the notes and chords to reach out and draw the resistant to resonate in the hearts of the listeners.

Those who stay become enraptured with the beauty of the song, they experience the beauty of the piece and they immerse themselves in it. They feel the happiness and the joy of the song at points and the lightness of the major chords. At others they hear the sound of the minor chords as they create a more intimate touch on the heart.

Most importantly, the song has touched the hearts of those who listen. It has shown them a part of themselves that resonates with the song. It draws them to the song and inserts them into it. The music becomes desired by the listener, it is favoured; it satisfies, it reveals - who they are.

The one who writes the score, the piano player who reveals the music and the music which draws to the piano player all have a common purpose.

Sometimes there is a rest...

Not every note resounds all the time. Sometimes there is a time of rest.

Ever notice that sometimes the loudest notes of the heart are in the silence of the song. The piano player is there, the song is still being played but there is a rest.

What is the purpose of a rest in music?

Why doesn't the musician fill up every moment of the song with every note possible?

Surely, the more notes playing at the same time the better - right?

NO... The beauty of the song is in the skillful application of the notes in the context of the song. The note is not used just because it is a note; it is used where it fits, to bring beauty and harmony and to reflect the artistry of the piano player.

Does the music speak to you in the silence?

Consider that perhaps the note is silent so that it can appreciate the other notes. So that it can reflect on the whole song and not just its individual part. The note can then come to understand that it is not alone on this musical journey, but that it is supported and brought into harmony with others to create a beautiful musical landscape in the hearts of others.

The importance of the Note...

Every note has its purpose, it has value. It has been created by the creator for a specific sound. The note by itself is beautiful, wonderful, unique and needed, yet it is not until it is played in the context of song that it has its greatest impact.

God loves harmony, he even says where two or more are gathered in his name there he is in the midst of them. (Matt 18:20)

Yet I ask you to consider this...

Does a single note need to understand the whole symphony or just when to sound?

Is music more than just a group of notes together or is there some structure, some divine plan that brings the notes together in harmony with one another to paint a picture in the minds and hearts of those who hear it.

Let's step away from the church analogy for a minute

I ask you to consider that your life is like a song.

Your life is offered up as a song to the Lord. Will it be a sweet song filled with beauty offered to you God; or will it be your own personal rendition of Miley Cyrus twerking?

Each of us has a song to sing, will our song bring life to those around us or will your song bring death?

Does your song paint a picture of love in the hearts and minds of those who are near?

Like a song, your life has a beginning a middle and an end...

If you love and believe in the piano player... your song will be played again. The very essence of who you are will fill the heavens for all time.

Did you know that the bible says that God sings over you?

Zephaniah 3:17

New King James Version (NKJV)

*¹⁷ The LORD your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing."*

God sings over you – He will rejoice over you with singing. Singing has value to God.

Psalms 32:7

New King James Version (NKJV)

*⁷ You are my hiding place;
You shall preserve me from trouble;
You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah*

God will encourage you and surround you with songs of deliverance.

You and the song of your life have value to God. He sent his son so that you might sing eternally in his presence.

So one last time I will change gears...

What does the bible tell us about music?

I want you to consider the words of the bible in the light of the fifth gospel we have been speaking about today...

What songs of praise will our notes inspire? What songs will our lives bring to those around us? What is the value of our praise?

God wants to hear our songs of praise; he wants to hear us. David tells us:

Psalms 150:1-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

² *Praise Him for His mighty acts;*

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

³ *Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;*

Praise Him with the lute and harp!

⁴ *Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;*

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

⁵ *Praise Him with loud cymbals;*

Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

⁶ *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.*

Praise the LORD!

Psalms 95:1 New King James Version (NKJV)

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

We are to sing praises to our God. Today we are in the process of discovering that this is not only music...

Colossians 3:16 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

James 5:13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹³ *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.*

Psalm 33:1-4 New King James Version (NKJV)

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!

For praise from the upright is beautiful.

² *Praise the LORD with the harp;*

Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.

³ *Sing to Him a new song;*

Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

⁴ *For the word of the LORD is right,*

And all His work is done in truth.

Hebrews 2:12 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² *saying:*

"I will declare Your name to My brethren;

In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

1 Corinthians 14:14-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴ *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.*

2 Chronicles 5:13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹³ *indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying:*

"For He is good,

For His mercy endures forever,"^[a]

that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud,

We are called to sing... The church has a function and we have a message:

Revelation 5:9 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying:*

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals; For You were slain,

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation

Remember I said that there is one who writes the score, There is the piano player who reveals the music and the music which draws to the piano player all have a common purpose.

The church is the piano, the author of the score is God the Father, the piano player is Christ, the music is the Holy Spirit and you are the notes...

What does our song sound like to our community?

Let us not allow our piano to gather dust, but to bring life and joy.

Let the song of this church be unified and beautiful. Let it reach out through the music within the notes and carry the great message of hope and Joy that is possible in Jesus.

Let the song of your life praise the Lord, let the music that you produce be Holy and acceptable as witness to the symphony of what Jesus is doing in your life.

Most of all... Let your song be heard!

Prayer