

"The Blessings of Music" 2 Samuel 6:14-16, 20-21; Ephesians 5:15-20 Pastor Cathy Hamblin  
July 19, 2020 Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

Judges 5:3; Psalm 9:11, 149:1

Hear, kings! Listen, rulers! I, to the LORD, I will sing. I will make music to the LORD, Israel's God.

**Sing praises to the LORD, who lives in Zion! Proclaim his mighty acts among all people!**

Praise the LORD!

**Sing to the LORD a new song; sing God's praise in the assembly of the faithful!**

Prayer of Invocation

**God of song, lift up our hearts today so that our worship may be more than words and music, but that our spirits may ascend to those heights of joy and glory that are your gift to your people. May we recognize you in the faces that surround us this day. May our lives become an expression of your Living Word. Amen.**

The Word

2 Samuel 6:14-16, 20-21; Ephesians 5:15-20

David, dressed in a linen priestly vest, danced with all his strength before the LORD. **This is how David and the entire house of Israel brought up the LORD's chest with shouts and trumpet blasts.**

As the LORD's chest entered David's City, Saul's daughter Michal, David's wife, was watching from a window. She saw King David jumping and dancing before the LORD, and she lost all respect for him. **David went home to bless his household, but Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet him.**

"How did Israel's king honor himself today?" she said. "By exposing himself in plain view of the female servants of his subjects like any indecent person would!" **David replied to Michal, "I was celebrating before the LORD, who chose me over your father and his entire family, and who appointed me leader over the LORD's people, over Israel—and I will celebrate before the LORD again!"**

So be careful to live your life wisely, not foolishly. Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times. **Because of this, don't be ignorant, but understand the Lord's will.**

Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: **speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Living the Word

*"Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts."* The Apostle Paul writes these words to the people of Ephesus, but also to us. Paul carried the Word of God out into the world almost 2000 years ago, yet the scriptures are still meaningful and alive for us today.

In order to speak with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs there are a several things that need to be acknowledged: First you have to know some psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; and then you have to understand at least some of what you are saying.

"No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I'm clinging. Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?" It takes some rough experiences in life and a faith to match and then there is power in those words. These are words you can hold onto until you need that power of God to face and overcome your hard times. But they are a witness to others, when you can't keep from singing them because of the strength of faith you have gained by your trials.

Of course, not everyone will appreciate our enthusiasm as we are filled with the Holy Spirit which leads us to song and dance. King David danced in celebration for God. His wife, Michal, didn't appreciate his expressions of glee before the people.

She was embarrassed by him and disgusted by his display. But David hadn't been dancing for the people, he had been dancing for God.

Music is a wonderful gift to express our feelings and emotions. It is also a great learning tool. Sing with me: A, B, C, D (the alphabet song). How many of you learned your letters and their order in that way? There was a custodian at one of the former churches that I served, that sang in the choir and in the halls as he cleaned. One Monday as I came into the office, I heard Ted singing "Bless the Lord, O My Soul." Ted sang most of the time, I believe it was part of his joy!

The Healing Power of Music. From an article written by author Mary Ellen Geist, found in the AARP magazine (yes, I read it and usually learn something...)" Naomi was obviously distraught as she said "I've been a bad girl. Am I in trouble?" Tears begin to form in the corners of her eyes. She wrings her hands as she sits in her wheelchair in the lobby of the Alzheimer's care facility.

"No, you're not in trouble," says recreational therapist Mindy Smith. But nothing seems to help Naomi's mood. "I've been a bad girl," she repeats over and over. Then Mindy says "Do you want your music?" Naomi's face brightens as headphones are gently placed over her ears. And as a big band arrangement of George Gerwin's "S Wonderful" flows from her iPod, Naomi begins to smile.

Scenes like this are being repeated in nursing facilities and homes across America. New research is confirming and expanding an idea long held by those who work with dementia patients: Music can not only improve the mood of people neurological diseases, it can boost cognitive skills and reduce the need for anti-psychotic drugs.

Music therapists who work with Alzheimer's patients describe seeing people "wake up" when the sounds of love and familiar music fills their heads. Often, after months or even years of not speaking at all, they begin to talk again, become more social and seem more engaged by their surroundings. Some began to remember names long forgotten. Some even do what Alzheimer's patients often cannot do as their disease worsens: They remember who they are."

A choir has been formed in Minneapolis from people living with Alzheimer's and other brain diseases and their caregivers. The cofounder of the 'Giving Voice Chorus', Mary Lenard, says so much of the disease involves "things they can no longer do or navigate. So the choir is something they can do. They can be joyful and laugh and sing and be part of this new community." One choir member told Lenard, "When I am here, it's like I don't have Alzheimer's."

There is so much to be said about music. How many of you like to sing? Be brave – Shirley won't look back, and later pin point you for choir recruitment...How many of you can whistle a tune? I love to whistle, especially when I can't remember the words or the song goes into a wordless interlude. Any hummers out there? Times have changed in the Methodist Church, so I can even ask do we have any dancers out there? I love to dance – (it was disco in college) and it is difficult for me to keep my toes from tapping no matter what song we sing.

Music doesn't always convey joy and celebration. The psalms of lament help express hurt, anger and disappointment. They can be ways to share and work through some of the worst times of our lives. Psalm 137 is one of those. The Babylonian captivity (or Babylonian exile) is the period in Jewish history during which a number of Jews of the ancient Kingdom of Judah were captives in Babylonia. This time, recorded for us in the Old Testament, tells of the destruction of Jerusalem – the peoples Zion; and of the death, blinding and leading away of many of the Jews to Babylon.

Listen for the anger and pain in Psalm 137:

*Alongside Babylon's streams, there we sat down, crying because we remembered Zion. We hung our harps up in the trees there because that's where our captors asked us to sing; our tormentors requested songs of joy: "Sing us a song about Zion!" they said. But how could we possibly sing the LORD's song on foreign soil?*

*Jerusalem! If I forget you, let my strong hand wither! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy. LORD, remember what the Edomites did on Jerusalem's dark day: "Rip it down, rip it down! All the way to its foundations!" they yelled.*

*Daughter Babylon, you destroyer, a blessing on the one who pays you back the very deed you did to us! A blessing on the one who seizes your children and smashes them against the rock!*

We may only be able to imagine such anger and pain. But the words tell it all. There is both joy and sorrow in the lives of God's people and God's Word. Strength can also be found for all occasions. Ephesians 1:19 says: "What is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God's powerful strength."

*"Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts."* I know I have shared before, the blessings of music that gave me the strength that I needed when I was going through cancer ten years ago. During the diagnosis and waiting for appointments, it is the song we often sing as the Song of Praise after we bring our offering:

*"In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice. Look to God do not be afraid. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near."*

I've never been able to retain memory things well, including scripture, yet these words, set to music, I played over and over as I waited. The words are a reminder to be thankful and joyful in all things – even when it seems impossible; they also remind me that I have no need to be afraid if I focus on God and remember that God is always near. I especially like the word near, it is so much closer than God is here. God is always near us just waiting for us to look for that presence in our lives.

In worship the week before my surgery, the Lake Street Church Choir had a Spring Concert during worship which included the children, youth and adult choirs in the finale'. The song is based on Isaiah 30, *"Surely it is God who saves me, I will trust in God and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense and he will be my savior."*

The choral piece sings the same scripture over and over. By the end I was singing with them and had it firmly planted in my brain and heart for future use.

As they sang it that day I watched the faces of the children and thought, 'I hope they never forget these words.' Then I looked at the faces of the whole group – probably about 60 people who were wearing Jesus face for me as I needed to be reminded of God's strength for the days ahead.

I share that story with those who come to me to tell me they have been told the word 'cancer' for themselves or one they love. I say: "Find a scripture to hold on to. Say it, sing it, repeat it until it is what you grab when you need it. I doesn't have to be the ones I still hold on to, the Lord's prayer is good, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is good. Set to music they are even better.

When Mr. Wesley wrote 'The Instructions for Singing' which are found in the front of the hymnal, (and are great fun to explore) he forgot one: #8. Listen to the words, don't just read them. Think about their meaning. Then you will develop a list of the songs that are important to you and your life situation. It is sad when I sit with a family to plan their loved ones service, and I ask them about the deceased's favorite hymns or songs, and they don't remember ever sharing them. Music is such a gift, and it is to be shared.

Have you ever stopped long enough to hear your heart beat? Fast or slow for most of the time it beats a regular rhythm. It is the same rhythm that all music is built around. The beat of the drum, the notes on the paper, music is all about the rhythm of life. Sometimes more in sync than others, but it is what keeps order in our lives. Live into the blessing of the music!

Now, get your voice, whistler, hummer and toes warmed up while I pray.