

WHY MUSIC

Meditation given by Dan Phillips
At Caroline Valley Community Church
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9th Sunday after Christmas 2010

Job 35:9-10 Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty. But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night...'

Ephesians 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a Sunday for music, so I won't take up much of your time talking. But it is one of the great mysteries of this world, music is. Why did God create it? Why does the vibration of reeds and strings create something in the air that means something to us? Because music does move us, we must ask questions about what it is and why it affects us so.

What does music reach so deep into our soul? It does, we know that. Most of us have felt the effects of music. Perhaps it was a patriotic song; maybe it was a great hymn; or maybe it was a love ballad. Whatever it was, the vibrations in our ear from the sound actually changed and enhanced our emotional state. I personally dare you to listen to the HALELUJAH CHORUS or the WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE and not have your heart rate speed up. Try singing AMAZING GRACE or O HOLY NIGHT and have no emotional response. And why is that? It's just some sounds! It does not even have to be that loud.

And how does it affect us so? Music seems to bypass the conscious mind and reach something beyond that in us. We know that a different part of the brain controls music: not the same part that controls speech or conscious thought. Why did God make us that way? Why were we given this gift?

Music is common to every culture and every society. We sing, we chant, we play instruments, and we make music. Often it is accompanied by dance and by poetry. It is usually a very communal activity, a form of art that most of us can participate in to some degree. All of this tells me believe that God gave us this talent and means for us to use it together.

It is the only art form that we are commanded to use. Paul orders the new Christians of his day to sing to one another, to share music with each other in worship, and to sing to God. Imagine that: singing to God. We are told of choirs of angels. It seems we share this ability with the angels. God must be a great fan of music.

The following lyrics are from a song written by a Baptist minister around 1869, just a year or so after this church was begun.

My life goes on in endless song:
Above earth's lamentation,
I catch the sweet, tho' far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul--
How can I keep from singing?

What tho' my joys and comfort die?
The Lord my Saviour liveth;
What tho' the darkness gather round?
Songs in the night he giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to that refuge clinging;
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin;
I see the blue above it;
And day by day this pathway smooths,
Since first I learned to love it.
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
A fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am his--
How can I keep from singing?