

Sermon Notes

Advent Meditations: Music & Songs

Luke 1:67-79

December 13, 2015

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Introduction: *Songs, Music, & the Bible*

There is all kinds of singing and music throughout the Bible. There was singing at the beginning of the Bible, and there is singing at the end of the Bible. The singing at the beginning of the Bible includes the poetic singing of Adam because of Eve, but there is more...

The singing at the end of the Bible is found throughout the Revelation.

At the beginning, at the end...and in between.

All kinds (& places) of singing in the Bible

We find singing in prison (Acts 16:25) *before* being set free, and we find the children of Israel singing on the other side of the Red Sea *after* being set free (Exodus 15).

It's no wonder that we are to sing Psalm 118 ("The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation"), nor should we be surprised that Psalm 118 was sung (in part) during Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem.

Singing surrounds deliverance and redemption: deliverance/freedom from sin: "By transgression an evil man is snared, but the righteous sings and rejoices: (Prov. 29:6).

Right after David's confession of sin and the refreshment of forgiveness was upon him he said that the Lord surrounded him "with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7), and we have already seen that the Lord sings over His children (Zephaniah 3:17). For the sons of Korah—and this is something we should be able to relate to—the Lord's song is with them even in the night (Psalm 42:8).

If someone is cheerful, they are to sing Psalms (James 5:13). Hannah sang at the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 2). David was known as the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1), and his son, Solomon, wrote over 1000 songs (1 Kings 4:32). According to Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, Christians are to sing to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

There's all kinds of singing throughout the Bible.

Other...the absence of music

There are times to *not* sing, or when someone is unable to sing. Those who are suffering are to pray (James 5:13), and singing and chirping around someone who is deeply distressed is like removing their garments on a winter's day (Prov. 25:20).

Still more on the presence or absence of music...(some examples)

There is some deep mystery, and much that is unknown. However we are all aware of the case of King Saul who had an evil spirit about him, and the only sure time that he had much peace about him was during the playing of music by another, by David (1 Samuel 16, 18, 19). It is considered that when the music was gone, he was even worse.

Where the presence and/or work of the Lord is, there is music and singing. What the Lord does calls forth song. This is true with what's called "a new song" in the Bible, and Psalm 148 refers to the entirety of creation acting like a choir. Philippians 2:1-11 is called the *carmen Christi*, the hymn of/to Christ.

Songs, Music, & Advent

Having considered some of "the things and themes" which surround us during this time of the year, we are striving to think biblically about these things and about what we do. We have looked at gifts, and last week we considered light and lights.

Today is obviously about songs and music, and we are truly surrounded by this right now. Peter Leithart recently wrote,

"The Christmas season is our great season of singing. This is as true for non-Christians as for Christians. Non-Christians may not sing "Silent Night" or "Joy to the World," but their homes are filled with "Frosty the Snowman" and "White Christmas."

Songs and music are more than sound(s). There is an order, a fashioning, shaping, or crafting...even a "created into" which occurs with sound so that songs and music "come forth."

Our songs and our story are still present...

Our songs and our story "stick" with our children

The First Advent of Jesus was surrounded by four songs:

Mary's Magnificat, the Benedictus of Zacharias, the Gloria in Excelsis of the angels, and the Song of Simeon.

Songs and music are "glorified speech" (Jordan), and it's almost as if the words deserved (needed?) some adornment. After more than nine months of silence, the elderly Zacharias broke forth into song.

The angels sang at creation, and they also joined in song when the Creator "took on" human flesh. They sang when Adam was created, and they sang when the Last Adam came forth.

This is inescapable, unavoidable...right and proper so to do; we sing because of the presence and the work of the Lord.