

Lecture 18- Worship & Music (II)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17

Key Concepts

- Music dynamics in the church

Lecture Objectives

- Characterize the role of singing in a congregation
- Examine the question of style of music in worship

Preliminary Questions

- How does it challenge your thinking to view singing as prayer, praise and proclamation?
- Why is style of music so deeply divisive in church settings? What can be done to ease those divisions in your own church or your community?
- How can improper associations of music be changed? Are there some cultural associations that are so deep as to rule a tune (or even a style) out of place in worship within your setting?
- What benefits – or detriments – might accompany the desire to become more diverse in worship music in your own setting?

Worship & Music (II)**I. Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs**

A. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16

B. Not precise categories but generally as follows:

1. Psalms: Inspired Old Testament psalms and other Scripture songs
2. Hymns: Human compositions developing biblical truth
3. Spiritual songs: More spontaneous and/or simpler musical expressions (by Spirit's prompting)

C. For hymn assignment: Song with equivalent of two non-repeating stanzas (see Appendix G for thoughts on hymn paper)

II. Dynamics of Corporate Congregational Singing

A. Happens in a cultural context (not a vacuum)

B. Whole person is involved

1. Language in action (not just in a book or on a screen)
2. Expressive of emotions joined to and responding to content
3. Words come off page into and back out of the body (lungs, vocal chords)

C. Characteristics (Paul Wren, *Praying Twice*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002)

1. Corporate
2. Corporeal
3. Inclusive (only 5% population “monotones”)
4. Creedal
5. Ecclesial (past communion of saints and present worldwide)
6. Inspirational
7. Evangelical (before watching world)

III. Theologians and Musicians

- A. Need each other for effective song in worship
 - B. Many great writers of hymn words have been theologians and preachers often with some musical appreciation
 - C. Many great musical composers are not theologians but have some theological appreciation
- IV. Role of Song in Corporate Public Worship (Paul Jones, Chapter Ten of *Give Praise to God* P&R, 2003)
- A. Prayer
 - B. Praise
 - C. Proclamation

Note: More detailed book on music and the church (mentioned last time) plus another on worship and arts:

Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. Fortress Press, 1998.

Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*. IVP, 2003.

V. Style of Music

Gospel-driven biblical and reformed worship transcends style yet is able to be expressed in multiple valid styles.

- A. Sing to the Lord a new song - Psalm 96:1 (Best, p.145)
 - 1. Sing - not optional: all believers are to sing
 - 2. To the Lord - offering to the Lord, not people
 - a. First to the Lord and then to one another
 - b. Choirs and soloists sing to Lord while people listen in
 - 3. A new song
 - a. Borrowed, repeated or brand new - fresh faith expressed
 - b. Sing for the thousandth repetition as if for the first time!
 - 4. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
 - a. Old words sung to old familiar tunes
 - b. New words sung to new tunes
 - c. Old words sung to new tunes
 - d. New words sung to old tunes
- B. Danger of idolatry in music (Best, p.169) - Three kinds of idolatry
 - 1. Quality - if beautiful, use it whether effective or not
 - 2. Effectiveness - if effective, use it whether quality or not
 - 3. Stasis - if worked well, don't change it

“There is no church, large or small, rich or poor, ethnically diverse or homogeneous, that will not face one, two or all three of these dilemmas. But I usually works out that the high-culture/high-taste artists face the first idol; the church-growth/seeker-sensitivity leadership, the second; and the traditionalists, the third.” Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 169.

- C. Problem of association with music
 - 1. From Bach to rock - wide range of strong associations
 - 2. Improper use of something does not negate proper use of something
 - 3. Instruments used in corporate public worship (CPC - Richmond)
 - 4. Bringing aspects of music in a culture into corporate public worship
 - a. Nobody sings in a cultural vacuum
 - b. Making music “holy to the Lord” - Zechariah 14:20-21
- D. Heart-language of worship reflected in song

1. Music is not a universal language – varieties around world
2. Meaning understood by cultural context - custom, tradition, circumstance
3. Appreciate generational and ethnic differences in musical expressions
4. High culture, folk culture, and popular culture distinctions
5. Musical elitism is not age or style specific!

“Hymnody needs to be popular. It is more closely related to folk song than to art song...because hymnody is, in its very essence, a kind of folk song...we must never close the door to new hymns written in the idiom of our day....Time has a way of selecting the classics. We do not have to worry about that. What is important is that we give each generation its turn at expressing its devotion in the idiom of its day. Christian hymnody is like a great art museum. It has treasures from a great variety of ages and cultures, but it always seems to have room to show the best of contemporary works as well.”
Hughes Old, *Leading in Prayer*, p. 339.