

“Church Music”
Colossians 3:16
(Preached at Trinity, September 16, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul has been describing the unique contrast between what we were as lost people and what we are as God's redeemed.
 - A. He refers to the lost in **Verse 6** - "sons of disobedience" who are under the wrath of God. He describes the deeds of our old self and tells us to put these past sins to death.
Colossians 3:5 NAU - "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."
Colossians 3:5 ESV - "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you"
Colossians 3:5 CSBO - "Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly"
Colossians 3:5 KJV - "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth"
 - B. He contrasts our old self with the new self. He describes the virtues of the new self as that which we are to adorn ourselves with as a beautiful garment.
Colossians 3:12-14 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity."
2. Now as we come to **Verse 16** Paul takes us to a different level. First he emphasizes the supremacy of the Word of God which must dwell in us in every aspect of our lives.
"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you"
Then he turns our attention to the music of the church.
"with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
3. This morning I want us to consider the matter of music in the church. This is a hotly contested topic that has often been termed "worship wars." This text sheds a lot of light on the subject.
 - I. First of all, the content of church music –
"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another "
 - II. Second, the various types of church music - "psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs"
 - III. Third, the prerequisite for church music
"singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

- I. First of all, the content of church music –
 "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another "
- A. The Biblical emphasis is upon the content more than the style of the music
1. Our music should reflect sound doctrine.
 2. The chief musicians in the Old Covenant were theologians.
 - a. In **1 Kings 4** we are told that Solomon was a musician, writing 1005 Psalms (which have been lost). As his wisdom was described he is compared with several men, two of which were Ethan and Heman. This implies that except for Solomon, two of the wisest men who ever lived were musicians.
1 Kings 4:30-32 NAU - "Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was *known* in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005."
 b. Sadly, what we see in most modern church music is a lack of emphasis on theology.
 Some of the so-called praise music is hyper-repetitive.
 Some are just plain bad theology.
 Even some of the older hymns are bad theology.
 I serve a risen Savior
 He's in the world today.
 I know that He is living,
 Whatever men may say.
 I see His hand of mercy;
 I hear His voice of cheer;
 And just the time I need Him
 He's always near.
 He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
 He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
 He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
 You ask me how I know He lives?
 He lives within my heart.
 The evidence for God's existence is not our experience. It is true that we have an active faith and a living relationship with Christ. But we know He exists not because our heart says He exists but because the Bible says He exists. There are many cult leaders who claim God speak in their hearts. But what does the Bible say.
 Paul says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you."
 3. Too much of church music today places more emphasis on the style of the music – the beat, the instruments, the praise team.
 Paul is saying that our music must have a function of teaching.
Colossians 3:16 NAU - "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

4. The work of the church, the work of the Gospel ministry is to build up Christ's body that all might be preserved unto His coming. Paul stated the same thing back in **Chapter 1 Colossians 1:28 NAU** - "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."
 - a. The method of building up the church is teaching and admonishing
 - b. Even our music must have this content.

II. Second, the various types of church music –

"psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs"

- A. Paul gets very specific – "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs"
 1. Biblical worship is ordered by God. It is specific. It is ordained. Worship is to be governed by the Word of God. We call this the Regulative Principle of Worship
 - Prayer
 - The reading and proclamation of the Word of God.
 - The singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs
 - The ordinances
 2. **LBC 22:5** - "The reading of the Scriptures, preaching, and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism, and the Lord's supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear; moreover, solemn humiliation, with fastings, and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner."
- B. What is the distinction between Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?
 1. "Psalms"
 - a. Some insist that all of these are speaking of Psalms – this is common among the exclusive Psalmody people. There is some merit to this. Paul sometimes stacks different words to express the same thing. But Paul is most likely referring to different types of music here – music specific for the church.
 - b. The Greek word ψαλμός is used seven times in the NT – consistently referring to the Book of Psalms
 - c. The Psalter was Israel's songbook. The Psalms were tied closely to Old Testament worship. They were sung in the Temple. The OT word *psalms* refers to a melody. The NT Greek refers to the "plucking of strings." The Psalms were meant to be sung.
 - d. The Psalter should be given a place in the worship of the New Testament church.
 2. "Hymns" - ὕμνος – Louw & Nida refers to it simply as a song with religious content but as we apply it to the NT church these would be songs with an emphasis upon the praise of God in the context of the Gospel. Where Psalms refer to the OT arrangements of music, Hymns and Spiritual Songs describe music particular to the NT church.

- a. Songs like “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” “Come Thou Almighty King” “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name”
- b. When Paul and Silas were arrested in the pagan city of Philippi they sang hymns at midnight. The prisoners listened because their words were unique. The church had its own music.
Acts 16:25 NAU - "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them"
3. “spiritual songs” - ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς –
 - a. Paul is emphasizing in this passage the importance of teaching and admonishing one another.
The songs of worship should have theological content.
 - b. Paul calls them “spiritual” songs. Spiritual songs are songs directed by the Holy Spirit. The NIV translates it – “songs from the Spirit.”
 - b. Most likely these were songs with an emphasis on teaching about the experience of the Christian life – the cross of Christ, the glory of our salvation.
“It is Well With My Soul” “The Power of the Cross” “And Can it Be” “Amazing Grace”
4. There is considerable overlap on all of these. While the Jews sang primarily Psalms the Psalms speak richly of the salvation of God. The NT church developed music of its own, music that praised God and taught of His glorious work in Christ. The music of the Church is rich in Biblical truth

III. Third, the prerequisite for church music –

"singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

- A. Christian music must flow from the heart
 1. Notice Paul begins, “Let the word of Christ dwell within you”
 - a. For many, the Word of God is something external. It is a Book of stories and commands that have not gripped the heart.
 - b. For the Christian, the Word of God has been implanted within the heart. It is a part of us.
James 1:21-22 NAU - "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."
 - c. Paul refers to the Scriptures as the Word of Christ here because this entire section is Christo-centric. We are seeking Christ seated at the right hand of God. Our life is hidden with Christ. We are living in the hope of Christ who is our life. Christ is the very essence of God’s revelation to man.
Verse 11 – “Christ is all in all”

2. Our hearts have been overpowered by the glories of Christ. Our worship reflects this. But worship is only possible for those who are united to Christ by faith.
 - a. The lost person doesn't have the heart for it. And he doesn't have access to the throne of God. Christ must be our Mediator
John 14:6 NAU - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 - b. This doesn't rule out the *responsibility* of all men to worship. God created all things, He owns all things, He rules all things. He is worthy that all of creation worship Him.
 As Creator God has the right to expect His creation to bow before Him. Don't forget the words of Christ regarding those complaining of the praise He was receiving at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem:
Luke 19:40 NAU - "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"
 - c. While all of creation has the duty to worship God, God's people alone have the capacity to worship Him.
 3. The prerequisite for Church music is hearts equipped to sing it.
- B. True worship is not to be measured by its outward elements but by the hearts of the worshippers. True worship flows from the heart.
 "singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
Eph 5:19 NAU - "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;"
1. Regeneration makes all things new – our music is also transformed
 Spurgeon – "Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life and soul and heart into every song, since we have new mercies every day and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord."
 2. Christian worship is Christ centered, heart filled, passionate, heavenly.
Colossians 3:1 NAU - "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."
 - a. If the focus is upon the particular music style it is easy to miss the focus of Christ.
 - b. Notice we teach and admonish one another in our church music but the focus is upon God
- C. Worship is filled with joyful singing – singing fuel by hearts of gratitude
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "giving thanks through Him to God the Father."
Ephesians 5:20 NAU - "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father"
1. Thanksgiving humbles us and draws out of us acts of praise and worship
 2. In the Psalms we continually see worship joined with thanksgiving
Psalms 100:4 NAU - "Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name."
Psalms 92:1 NAU - "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day. It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;"

- a. In the Hebrew the word for praise and the word for thanksgiving is often expressed using the same word - תָּרַחַ
- Psalm 42:5 NAS** - "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence."
- Psalm 43:4 NAU** - "Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God."
- b. It is left up to the translator
- Psalm 57:9 NAU** - "will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples"
- Psalm 57:9 CSBO** - "I will praise You, Lord, among the peoples"

Conclusion:

1. This is the music God has ordained for the Church
 - It is doctrinally sound and instructs the church
 - It is specific – “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”
 - It is sung from the heart, led by the Spirit, and motivated by thanksgiving
2. In our modern day church culture that puts greatest emphasis on particular music styles may we remember the Biblical emphasis.
3. May God grant our church to continually grow in Biblical Worship