

Music in Worship – Lesson 10

The Purpose of Music in Worship

- Review
 - The distinctness of the worship of God’s assembled people
 - Christ has told us in Scripture that the gathering (*ekklesia*) of believers is set apart from the rest of life.
 - 1 Timothy 3:14-15 – “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”
 - 1 Corinthians 5:4 – “When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . with the power of our Lord Jesus. . .”
 - How we are to determine what is appropriate in worship
 - Because the church is distinct from the rest of life (it is God’s house), when we are gathered as his church, we are to only do those things that God has authorized.
 - Leviticus 10:1-3 – “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord has said: “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.”’ And Aaron held his peace.”
 - Mark 7:6-8 – “And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”
 - The distinction between Old Testament worship and New Testament worship
 - Because we live under the New Testament instead of the Old Testament, we must be careful to base our worship on what is authorized under the New Testament.
 - John 4:21– Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”
 - Hebrews 7:18-19, 22-24 – “For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.”
“This [oath] makes Jesus the guarantor of a better [testament]. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.”
 - The necessary requirements for New Testament worship
 - The requirement of the New Testament is for worship that is 1) of the true God, 2) truthful, 3) given by believers.
 - John 4:21-24 – “. . . the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
 - John 14:6 – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

- John 15:26 – “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”
 - The requirement to sing in worship
 - We are commanded, by both example and directive, to sing as part of our New Testament worship.
 - Matthew 26:29-30 – “. . . ‘I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.’ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”
 - Colossians 3:16-17 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
 - The kinds of song we are to sing in worship
 - We are instructed to sing Psalms, hymns, and other spiritual songs in our worship.
 - Ephesians 5:19-20 – “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. . .”
 - The place of instruments in worship
 - We are permitted (not commanded) to use instruments in our worship.
 - The use of instruments in worship is not abhorrent to God. (See Old Testament usage.)
 - Many of the Psalms call for the use of instruments.
 - Many of the words used to speak of singing in worship imply the use of accompanying instruments.
 - Eph 5:19 – “. . . singing and making music (psallō) from your heart to the Lord . . .” (HCSB)
- Purpose of Music in Worship
 - There are two primary purposes for music in worship; a vertical purpose and a horizontal purpose.
 - The vertical purpose
 - As music is a part of worship, what is true of worship in general is also true of musical worship.
 - Worship is of (or for) God. It is somewhat obvious to say but the point of worship is to give (or ascribe) glory to God and, as a result, to submit ourselves to God.
 - More descriptively, we can say that to name, describe, discuss, and think on God's character, attributes, and work is to worship him since God's glory is rooted in who he is.
 - This can be illustrated from the following passages:
 - Psalm 19:1-2 – The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.
 - Psalm 139:13-14 – For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
 - Eph 1:3-6 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
 - The vertical purpose of worship then is for the creature to rightly acknowledge, contemplate, and express who God is and the glory he deserves because of who he is.

- To again state the obvious, this means our worship is to be worship of God. (John 4:19-24)
- Our music then must have a vertical aspect to it. Its first purpose is to be music that worships God.
- The horizontal purpose
 - We are specifically told that music is to be used in service of our fellow believers.
 - Ephesians 5:19 – “. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. . .”
 - Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
 - Our music is to 1) teach and 2) admonish fellow believers.
 - Teach – To teach is simply “to give instruction” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary). It is positive in nature in that correction of something incorrect is not in view.
 - Admonish – To admonish is “to put in mind, i.e. (by implication) to caution or reprove gently” (Strong’s Definitions). It is negative in nature in that it seeks to alter some action or belief that is incorrect.
 - Music that teaches and admonishes is music that espouses proper doctrine and actions and corrects wrong doctrine and actions.
 - The horizontal aspect of our worship music then is as a tool to instruct us in the way we are to live as God’s people.
- Vertical and horizontal
 - Interestingly, the vertical and horizontal aspects cannot be cleanly distinguished from each other. When we praise God for who he is, we cannot avoid teaching those around us. And when we properly teach and admonish those around us, we cannot help but describe, discuss, and think on God’s character, attributes, and work.
- These aspects demonstrate why it is so important that our singing is truthful.
 - When we sing, we worship God. We must not worship God with untruth; to do so is contrary to God’s very nature and therefore abhorrent to him.
 - When we sing, we teach each other; if the doctrine in our songs is wrong, then by singing we will teach and learn things that are incorrect.

Pre-Reformation, Lutheran Song – AD 1400-1600

- John Hus (ca. 1372-1415)
 - Czech theologian & philosopher who taught at the University of Prague
 - Read Wycliffe’s writings and adopted many of Wycliffe’s views which he began to teach
 - Was eventually tried, condemned, and executed as a heretic
 - Reportedly, Hus could be heard singing psalms as he was burned
- Hussites
 - Hus’ teachings were generally accepted in the Kingdom of Bohemia.
 - Following his death, the Czech’s and Bohemians in the kingdom became more ardent followers of Hus’ teaching and rejected many popish doctrines.
 - Pope Martin V issued a papal bull against the Hussites and launched a crusade against them.

- During the war, many of the Hussite's wives & children were sent to Moravia for safety. After 14 years, in 1434, the Hussites were largely victorious and gained an official exception from the Roman Church regarding some of Hus' teachings.
- In 1457, a group of Hussites formed a society – “The Brethren of the Law of Christ “ or the *Unitas Fratrum*. Those in this society later became known as the Moravians.
- By the time of the Reformation, congregational singing was all but extinct in Europe. The one significant exception was the German people who loved singing so deeply that the Pope had granted them special authorization for congregational song. However, even in the Germanic States, congregational singing was infrequent.
- Martin Luther (1483-1546)
 - Augustinian monk who inadvertently sparked the Reformation.
 - Held to the priesthood of the believer; this implied that each believer could pray to God directly.
 - Also held that singing is a form of prayer. Therefore, every believer could and should sing.
 - Early in the Reformation, Luther suggested that German hymns be sung congregationally after certain choir pieces. He called for new songs to be written. The songs that resulted are known as Lutheran Chorale.
 - In 1524, the first Lutheran hymnals were published. The *Etlich Christlich Lieder/Achterliederbuch* (Book of Eight Songs) contained eight songs, four of which were written by Luther, and five tunes.
 - Luther contributed to and supervised the publication of several more hymnals.
 - The *Erfurt Enchiridia* (Little Manual or Erfurt Manual) was a larger collection (26 texts, 16 tunes) which became the standard Lutheran hymnal for a time. Notably, it included *Christ Lag In Todesbanden* (Christ Lay in Death's Strong Bands).
 - *Geistliche lieder auff neu gehessert* (Improved Spiritual Songs) – The appearance of new hymnals that were not approved by Luther motivated him to publish his own updated hymnal in 1529. This is the first publication of Luther's *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*.
 - *Geystliche Lieder* – The last hymnal whose publication Luther supervised. It was completed in 1545.
 - German Bar Tunes – Did Luther use drinking songs for his hymns?
- Despite Luther's emphasis on congregational singing, it was not until the end of the 16th century that congregational singing emerged from the shadow of choral music. Congregational music was almost always unaccompanied and in unison.
- *Piae Cantiones* – A collection of 74 medieval Latin songs, both sacred and secular published in Germany in 1582. Not directly related to German Lutheran song development but important as historical evidence of Scandinavian Lutherans' musical reliance on “ancient” tunes. For us, it is important as the source for the tune DIVINUM MYSTERIUM.
- *Fünzig Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen* (Fifty Spiritual Songs and Psalms) – Lukas Osiander published his groundbreaking collection in Nuremberg in 1586. For the first time, the tunes were written in four parts and placed the melody in the soprano line. This allowed the congregation to sing the melody while the choir sang the harmonies. This practice was quickly adopted by other compilers and began the kantional style (simple chord harmonies with the melody in the soprano line).
- *Freuden Spigel* (Mirror of Joy) – Hymn collection compiled by Philip Nicolai in 1598. Included Nicolai's WACHET AUF which has been called the “King of Chorales.” It was paired with his “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying” which Nicolai wrote during an intense plague in Westphalia (Germanic region).