

**Recovering a Lost Legacy**  
**The Legacy of Music in Worship (Part 1)**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
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Well, we're taking a break this summer, we're taking a break this summer from our study of 1 John and taking a look at the Christian church's lost legacy. Webster defines a legacy as something that has been handed down from the past, like when the Library of Alexandria was destroyed in 48 BC, the world lost thousands of years of human knowledge. The same thing has happened in the larger Christian church. Over the last 150 years or so the Christian church has lost its rich legacy of knowledge and practice.

As I mentioned last week, in some cases that's because of carelessness and neglect, but sadly, in other cases, it's an intentional abandonment of the legacy, the biblical legacy, that has been received in exchange for some new idea, some new philosophy, some new approach. Many of you have come from churches here to Countryside where some or much of the Christian church's legacy has been lost, and so, as the elders and I discussed it, we thought it was important for me to address some of the basic elements of the church's legacy that has been largely lost in the contemporary evangelical church.

I want us to look at them in order to develop a deeper and more profound appreciation for that legacy, but also to understand its biblical foundation, the biblical foundations of these concepts so that we treasure them; we defend them; we benefit from them; and we pass them on to the next generation.

Last week we looked at the legacy of expository preaching. Today, and the next couple of weeks, I want us to focus on the recovery of and the legacy of music in worship. Wherever God's people are, they will sing. It's part of who we are. It's our spiritual DNA. It's the result of the Holy Spirit in our lives. I'm going to take today, Lord willing, and the next two Sundays to deal with this issue of music. Now, let me hasten to say, that's not because music is some sort of a problem here at Countryside. By God's grace, we enjoy unusual unity on this issue.

And by God's amazing and gracious providence we also happen to have the best music director that there is. (clapping) I mean that, yes. Seth really does a phenomenal job of choosing the best

music from the past and today, leading us, leading the choir, leading the other vocalists and musicians in music and worship so that it's worship and not a performance.

But although music is not a problem here, there are a couple of reasons that I want to spend significant time on this issue. Let me tell you what they are. First of all, many Christians have an unbiblical philosophy of music. It may be because they have belonged to churches where the legacy of biblical music in worship was entirely lost, or frankly even those who belong to good churches, may be the way you think about God's gift of music has been shaped, not by the Bible, but by the culture or by your own likes and preferences and ideas. So, it's important that we address this because so many Christians are so wrong when it comes to their understanding of music.

A second reason I want to focus on this because music is a crucial part of both our personal and our corporate worship of the God we love and serve. God created music, and its ultimate purpose is to bring Him glory. Music was around before the universe was around, and it will exist into eternity as a channel for the worship of God. So, I want us to study what Scripture teaches about music. Specifically, we are going to focus on music in worship. And as we look at what the Scripture teaches, we are going to gain several important insights into this issue of music in worship. That's where we are going today and the next couple of weeks.

So, let's look together at the first insight. I want us to begin with a biblical critique of today's music in worship. Now, based on that we are going to learn from Scripture, and I already know where we're going, there are several serious problems with contemporary churches' worship music. I'm just going to give you a list for now, but we'll address them biblically as the next couple of weeks unfold. So, let me just give you the problem with where we are when the Scripture informs our understanding of worship in music. Here are some serious problems.

Number 1, music has become extremely divisive in the church. Obviously, this was never God's intention. He hates those who cause division. He hates division in His church. This happens between individual members in a local church. This division over music really happens over generational differences in the church. That's why some churches try to solve that by having a traditional service and a contemporary service. That doesn't solve the problem, it only further divides God's people. Between the members of the church and the church's leadership at times

this becomes an issue of conflict, and certainly, between larger groups in evangelical Christianity. So, it's become extremely divisive. That's a problem.

The Bible does not in any way sanction division for division's sake particularly when it comes to issues of taste. Obviously, if it's truth, and we'll talk about that, that's a different issue.

A second biblical critique of music in worship is it often has poor quality poetry or music. Now we don't experience that here because Seth makes very good choices, but if you listen to the radio or you have been in other churches, you know that often there is really poor quality poetry or poor quality music.

Number 3, it often has weak or errant lyrics. Sometimes there's just nothing really to sing. I remember visiting a church one time and my wife and I were there with some others, and we were trying to sing and participate in the worship, but literally for five minutes we sang one lyric line, "it's a beautiful, wonderful day." Now, I thought it was a beautiful, wonderful day and even thought they didn't say in the song that it was because of God, I knew that God had made it a beautiful, wonderful day, because He's creator, because He's good, He showers us daily with good things. And so, for the first minute, I was able to participate in this song. But after a minute, I had pretty much wrung all of the truth I could ring out of it's a beautiful, wonderful day. And often sadly, that's the way songs are.

Other times there are errant lyrics. They're simply biblically wrong. Someone was telling me between the services about a song they sang this summer at a camp that said something like, and I don't know, I'm getting the lyric wrong I'm sure, it was something like, you know, God You're happy to take me and let me live however I want. Well, no, that wouldn't be true.

Number 4, music is often shaped by churches and movements with bad theology. For an example, Bethel Church in Redding, CA is a hotbed, not only of charismatic theology, but even heretical ideas. Sadly, Bethel Church has produced many of today's top Christian songs. In fact, today, I looked at the list of songs that are sung most frequently in America, and they produced a number of those songs. And Evangelical churches that would reject the theology that's taught there embrace it through their music.

Number 5, it's often aimed primarily at the emotions rather than the mind. It's about whipping people up. It's about creating an experience with, you know, smoke and lights and all that's

involved with whipping people up emotionally. Now, this isn't new by the way. I grew up in an old Southern Baptist Church where they did it with eight verses of "Just as I Am" after the sermon.

Number 6, it's often a performance rather than God directed worship. Now we are going to talk about styles coming in a couple of weeks. But understand this regardless of the style, it can be done in a way that is worship and it can be done in a way that is performance. God doesn't want a performance on a stage, He wants worship directed to Him.

Number 7, professing Christians often don't sing or sing out. Now let me just say this is a pet peeve of mine. Prepare yourself. You are going to hear about this several times. If God is worthy of our worship, then He's worthy of our worship. Christians need to sing.

Number 8, it is intentionally, that is worship music, focused on one style, on one kind of sound, or one era of music. You know, you go to some churches, and it is clear that the music director grew up in the sixties because that's the kind of music you hear, or the eighties, or whatever it is. Or one particular approach to music. We're going to see that's not a biblical model. There is a biblical model, and that's not it.

As we will discover today and the next couple of weeks, the Bible addresses every single one of those serious problems with today's music and worship. But I want us to begin our study of what the Bible teaches about this crucial issue by considering a biblical history of music.

So, the second insight I want you to see here is a biblical history of music. Music is such an incredible gift. Martyn Luther, the reformer, not only defended Sola Scriptura and Sola Fida, but he also revolutionized the role of music in worship, I love this quote,

The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to describe them. In suma, next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. This precious gift has been given to man alone, that he might thereby remind himself that God has created man for the express purpose of praising and extoling God.

That's what music reminds us of. That is exactly, by the way, what the Scripture teaches. But we need to get that in our minds. So, let's start with the big picture about the place and priority the

Scripture has given to music. Now, the Bible contains more than 600 references to music. We obviously, aren't going to exhaust them, or I would exhaust you.

But let's start at the beginning. Let's start with music in the Old Testament. What was it like there? Well, first of all understand this, that music existed before the creation of the universe. It existed before the creation of man. Music has its origin in God. Now, there are two possibilities. It's possible that God created music as He created all other things before He created the universe. That's one possibility.

The second possibility, and I lean here, is since Scripture says God Himself sings, as we will see, it's possible that music has always existed as an expression of the eternal mind of God.

Regardless, we know that music was the spontaneous reaction of those powerful intelligent beings that the Bible calls angels. It was their reaction to God and to His creation of the universe.

Turn with me to the book of Job, Job 38. You remember God begins to speak in Job 38 and confronts Job's understanding of His sovereignty in suffering, and He says this in Job 38:1,

... [Yahweh] answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? "Now gird up your loins like a man, ... I will ask you, ... you instruct Me! "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,

He's basically saying, look Job, you think you understand why your circumstances should be different, well then, let's talk about how much knowledge and power you really have. Were you there when I created? Did you have anything to do with that? Verse 5,

"Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, [now notice verse 7, remember the creation, and He said at the creation, and God was there obviously to know] When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?" [Now that expression, the sons of God has already occurred in the book of Job back in 1:6. It refers to the angelic beings around the throne of God.]

And so, what God is saying here, when I created the universe, when I created the earth, the angels sang together and shouted for joy. Wouldn't you have loved to have heard that song? So,

music was part of the angels' expression of the worship of God when He created the universe. But it wasn't long until music invaded the human history as well.

Moses describes the beginning of human music in the first book of the Bible. In Genesis 4 you have a description of the origin of human society that follows the fall of man. Moses describes there two distinct societies, two distinct lines. One was the godly line of Seth, the other the ungodly line of Cane. And out of Cane's family came secular society. Yet even in that sinful family and its descendants, you can see glimpses of God's common grace.

And one of those is that God gave even fallen man the gift of music. Look at Genesis 4:21. The previous verse was talking about Jabal, and then it says in verse 21 his brother's name was Jubal. For those of you who like to name your kids alike, you stand in a long tradition, Genesis 4, "His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who played the lyre and pipe." In other words, Jubal is the human father of those who play the instruments and accompany music. One of Cane's descendants, as God's common grace to man, was the one who gave life to instrumentation.

But music was also part of the godly line as well. Although there is no direct mention of music sung in the praise of God in the book of Genesis, the events of the book of Job occur during the same time period. And there we learn that the godly were singing about God. Turn with me to Job 36, Job 36:22

"Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him? Who has appointed Him His way, And who has said, 'You have done wrong'? [verse 24]

"Remember that you should exalt [God's] ... work, Of which men have sung."

So, even early on in human history, the godly line, the line of Seth, was praising God in song. This became a normal part of the worship of God's people. When you come to the time of Moses, music begins to play a crucial role in the corporate worship of God's people. In Exodus 15 you have the song of Moses, sung by Israel, commemorating God's deliverance at the Red Sea.

There is a fascinating passage, I wish I had time to take you to in Deuteronomy 31, where you have God commanding the people to memorize the song of Moses. He's to teach it to the people. They're to learn it and sing it so that they remember the truth of what God has said. Even during

the most difficult period of the Old Testament time in Judges when there was no king in Israel, when everyone did that which was right in his own eyes, there was music that was addressed to God. In Judges 5 you have Deborah's song of praise. In 1 Samuel 2 you have Hannah's song of praise about the birth of Samuel.

But then you come, after the Judges, to the richest time of Old Testament hymnody and songs of worship, and that's the period of the monarchies, specifically the time of David and Solomon. We are even introduced to David in 1 Samuel 16:18 in this way, "... one of the young men said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite [this is David] who is a skillful musician, ..." The very first thing he thought of when he thought of David was, "He is a skilled musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and [Yahweh] ... is with him." As you know David was a great Psalmist of Israel and wrote many of the Psalms that are in our Psalter.

But when David became king, he also identified 4000 Levites who were responsible for music at the tabernacle. In a later generation that same group became responsible for the music in the worship at the temple. David himself wrote 74 of the Psalms that are in the collection of the Psalter that we have, most of them in books 1 and 2 of the 5 books of the Psalms. His son Solomon wrote 1000 Psalms according to 1 Kings 4, but only 2 of his Psalms are recorded in the Psalter, Psalm 72 and Psalm 127. So, this was the great highpoint for song writing in the worship of the Old Testament.

But the same thread of spiritual songs can be traced throughout the rest of the Old Testament. Scholars believe that Ezra, the scribe, wrote a number of the 48 anonymous Psalms that are in the book of Psalms. Of course, there were other authors, and it is likely that the book of Psalms was completed in its current form under the direction of Ezra in that same timeframe. So, hundreds of years of song writing and song singing, corporately, among the people of God.

Now, when you come to the New Testament, you find that music and worship was constantly present in the life of our Lord, and in several different ways. I don't know if you have thought about this, but there was obviously music at all of the feasts of Israel. There were songs that were sung at the feasts. We have an inspired record of one of those. You remember after the Passover celebration in Matthew 26:30 it says, "After singing a hymn, [that is Jesus and the 11] they went out to the Mount of Olives." And there were other songs connected to each of the feasts of Israel.

In addition, there were songs of ascent that the pilgrims going to those feasts sang on the way, and as they even entered the temple. Daily there was music at the temple, morning and evening, accompanied by choirs and instruments. And every single Saturday of Jesus' life, think about this, every Sabbath Jesus attended the synagogue, and part of the synagogue worship was singing and music.

But Jesus was even more engaged in music than that, not just once a week. Since the Old Testament commands personal and private singing to God, and since our Lord perfectly obeyed God and kept all of His commands, we know that music was a daily part of our Lord's life. Jesus sang. And He sang all the time.

Because of our Lord's example and the Scripture's clear commands, music also plays a crucial role in the life of the individual believer and in the New Testament local church. Now we're going to consider this in depth during the rest of our time today and over the next couple of weeks, so I'll just mention it in this history. We'll come back and fill that in.

But let's fast forward to the future, and when we fast forward, we discover that music will be an essential part of the worship of the people of God in eternity. We will sing, accompanied by instruments in the presence of God forever. Turn to Revelation 5. We have studied this recently as we have been making our way through this book. But Revelation 5:8.

When ... [our Lord] had taken the book [that is the title deed to the earth, the scroll with seven seals], the four living creatures [those are those august beings, angelic beings around God's throne] and the twenty-four elders [representing the church of Jesus Christ] fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Notice there is both singing and there are instruments accompanying that singing. Go over to Revelation 14, Revelation 14:2 23.15



... I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard *was* like *the sound* of [a] harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

So, this is a song that only those one hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish evangelists who will evangelize during the tribulation period (this is their song; this is their special number in heaven) that they will sing. Go over to 15:2.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

And then the words of the song are recorded. So, understand this. We will sing with music accompaniment eternally. That's what the Scriptures teach. That's an overview of the biblical history of music.

And because of that biblical history, it's not surprising what we discover in a third insight that we learn from Scripture about music, and it is this. The biblical priority of music in worship, the biblical priority of music in worship. Let me just give you several biblical arguments for the priority of music in worship.

Argument number 1, God commands every believer to worship in music individually. You see singing is a command of God, and it's a response to God. It's what He commands us to do, but it is a natural response and reaction to what we learn about God. The Psalms constantly make this point and call God's people to sing. There're so many texts, but let me just highlight a couple for you. Turn to Psalm 33, Psalm 33:1.

Sing for joy in [Yahweh] ..., O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright. [praise fits those who know Him] Give thanks to [Yahweh] ... with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the Lord is upright, and all His work is *done* in faithfulness.

So, here, we have the command to sing and to play instruments in the worship of God because of who God is because He is worthy of this worship and praise. Turn over to Psalm 69, Psalm 69:30.

I will praise the name of God with song And magnify Him with thanksgiving.  
[and watch verse 31] And it will please [Yahweh] ... better than an ox *Or* a young bull with horns and hoofs.

In other words, listen, if I sing to God, if I praise God from my heart, it is a better and more acceptable sacrifice to God than if I lived in Old Testament times and offered an animal. It is exactly what Hebrews says, right? We offer the sacrifice of our lips giving praise to His name. Turn over to Psalm 96, Psalm 96:1.

Sing to [Yahweh] ... a new song; Sing to [Yahweh] ..., all the earth. Sing to [Yahweh] ..., bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all ... peoples. [why?] For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised....

In other words, it's because of who God is that calls out our praise, that calls out our singing and our worship. Look at Psalm 100, a favorite of mine, the first verse is a call to own God as our King. The second verse is a call to worship, serve, it's really another word for worship. "Worship [Yahweh] ... with gladness, Come before Him with joyful singing."

Psalm 147, and again, I'm just highlighting a couple of passages that show this. Psalm 147:1, Praise [Yahweh] ...! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant *and* praise is becoming.

Psalm 149 is about the praise of God in song, verse 1, Praise Yahweh! Sing to [Yahweh] ... a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones. Verse 5, Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds. Notice, there is a call to sing privately and individually, and corporately with God's people. We are commanded to sing to our God in worship.

Now, let me just say that we are in an audience-based entertainment culture. And there are too many churches where people just watch during the singing with their mouths closed. Now, that's true for a number of reasons. In some cases, it's because the music is a performance, and they

don't really want the people singing. Perhaps, music and singing and its importance have never really been explained. Others, I think, sometimes choose not to sing because, you know, I just can't sing well, or music is just my thing. In some cases, particularly with the younger set, it's just not cool.

Listen, all of those reasons are totally unacceptable. The Bible commands all true believers to sing. So, unless you have a physical issue, you can't sing that day, or can't sing period because of some physical limitation, or you're being asked to sing something that's wrong, that's an error, you have to sing. Not singing otherwise is a sin because it's a direct disobedience to our Lord. It's a command.

A second biblical argument for the priority of music in worship is this: a love for God-centered music is the fruit of being filled by the Spirit. Turn to Ephesians 5, the theme of the passage that begins in verse 15 of chapter 5 is, we, if we are going to walk worthy of our calling, must walk in biblical wisdom. You remember the second half of Ephesians is about walking worthy of our calling. That's Ephesians 4:1. Well, one way to walk worthy of our calling is to walk in biblical wisdom. Look at verse 15. "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise...." And then the following verses explain how to walk in biblical wisdom. There are several ways spelled out here, but the last one, the one to which Paul is building is in verse 18, "... do not [get] ... drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with [or by] the Spirit." Now, this is another message, in fact, if you weren't here when we worked our way through Ephesians, so listen.

But let me just give you a summary. Being filled by the Spirit means, not that you get more of the Spirit, (Christian, you've got all of the Spirit you are going to get, He indwells you) being filled by the Spirit means that the Spirit so fills you with the Word of God (compare Colossians 3:16) He so fills you with the Word of God that the Word of God permeates, directs, controls your thinking, your attitudes and your actions. So, be filled by the Spirit with the Word of God. That's the end of verse 18.

Now, in verse 19 Paul leaves that command and describes the consequences of being filled by the Spirit with the Word of God. There are consequences. Just like there are effects of being under the influence of alcohol, there are effects of being under the influence of the Spirit? What are those effects? Well, they are spelled out in verses 19-21. Look at them with me. And so, he

says in verse 18, and this is the main verb, “be filled with the Spirit.” And then you have several participles, verse 19,

speaking to one another in in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Now notice, there are five participles there that modify the main verb, “be filled.” Verse 19, speaking, singing, making melody; verse 20, giving thanks; verse 21, being subject. Those participles explain the primary consequences of being filled by the Spirit with His Word. Really there are three consequences. Verse 19, you have a love for God centered music. Verse 20, you’re characterized by a pattern of thankfulness. And verse 21, you have a heart of submission to human authority. Those are the inevitable results of being under the influences of the Spirit. So, listen carefully, where the Word is filling the heart under the influence of the Spirit, an inevitable consequence of that will be a love for God-centered music.

This is a spiritual diagnostic. Ask yourself, do you daily love and enjoy worshiping God with God-centered music? To whatever extent you have to say no to that understand that it’s a spiritual diagnostic, and it’s telling you one of two things. It’s either telling you, you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you don’t know God or regardless of what you claim. Or it may be telling you that you are a believer, but you are not allowing the Holy Spirit to fill really you with the knowledge of His Word so that this is what’s produced as you understand Who God is and that overflows in praise.

There’s a third argument for the priority of music in worship, and it’s that Christ commands the church to worship in music in its corporate worship. Now, let me just say that there is an increasing push in music today to incorporate secular music into the church’s worship. In fact, over the last few years churches have used everything from Coldplay, to Vanhalen, Creed, You 2, ACDC, Taylor Swift, and even Garth Brooks in the worship of the church. Right now, a pastor in our area is doing a series where each week he plays a secular song in his sermon to try to find the spiritual truth in that song.

Now, why do we include music in our worship, and why don’t we include secular songs? Well, there is one answer to both those questions. It’s the second commandment. You see, the second

commandment teaches that God alone has the right to prescribe how we worship Him. Listen to Exodus 20:4-5.

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them nor serve them....”

Now, listen carefully, that is not a commandment not to worship other gods because the first commandment is that commandment. You shall have no other gods before Me. That’s a commandment not to worship other gods. The second commandment, the one I just read, is a commandment not to shape your worship of the true God in the way you choose. Don’t follow the culture around you. That’s what they were tempted to do. All the people around ancient Israel, guess what, they had idols to represent their gods. Well, why can’t we have an idol to represent our God?

Which is, by the way, exactly what happened with the golden calf. They finished the golden calf, and what did they say? This is Yahweh, your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt. God said not only are you not have any other gods, but you don’t get to decide how to worship Me. That’s the second commandment. We only include certain elements in corporate worship based on what Scripture prescribes. Now, there was agreement among the reformers on this basic principle because it grew out of Sola Scriptura. The Bible is the ultimate and only authority in faith and practice. But, although they agreed on Sola Scriptura, they disagreed on how that fleshed out in determining what elements should be included in worship. And the reason I mention it is this, those two views from the reformation, are still very much alive and well today. And churches are shaped by them. What are those two views?

Well, the first view is that of the Lutherans and the Anglicans who joined with the Roman Catholics in embracing what was called the Normative Principle. The Normative Principle teaches that whatever Scripture does not explicitly forbid is acceptable in worship. In other words, the Normative Principle asks this: Does Scripture forbid this practice in worship? And if the Scripture doesn’t explicitly it, then it is acceptable. You can do what you want.

Others, the Reformed, embraced the opposite position, called the Regulative Principle. And the Regulative Principle argues that only that which Scripture explicitly prescribes is acceptable in

worship. The Regulative Principle asks this: Does Scripture command or directly sanction the practice? If not, it's not allowed in worship.

John Calvin puts it well when he writes, "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word." And he wasn't alone in this, both the Westminster Confession representing the Presbyterian line and the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689, representing the Baptists, both say exactly the same thing. Listen, the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself. And so, limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, listen carefully, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

Because of the danger of violating the second commandment, and because God has very clearly said that only He decides how we worship Him, the elders of this church embrace the Regulative Principle. That means our corporate worship, everything after the announcements you heard this morning, everything from that moment until our service is over happens because God has commanded us to do these things. Our corporate worship includes only seven elements, seven that God has prescribed in His Word. In our worship services, this is what you will see because it's what God sets forth.

Number 1, prayer

Number 2, worship in music

Number 3, the reading of Scripture

Number 4, the teaching of Scripture

Number 5, giving to support the ministries of the church and of the kingdom

Number 6, baptisms

And number 7, the Lord's table

That's it. That's all God has prescribed in His Word. That's all we're going to do in corporate worship. When we do those seven things, with the right heart, it honors God because those are His specific directives for our worship.

So, back to the theme, God's people sing in corporate, why? Because God Himself has commanded it to be part of our worship of Him. We saw it in the Old Testament. Corporate

worship was foundational. It's true in the synagogues that our Lord was a part of, and it's also true in the New Testament church. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul is dealing with the problem of tongues in Corinth, but in the middle of that discussion, he inserts several things that were part of the normal worship services of God's people. One of those is singing, 1 Corinthians 14:15 and 26. This is also what Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand here in Ephesians 5:19. God's people sing collectively for various reasons, and we'll look at those, Lord willing, next time.

There's a fourth argument for the priority of music, and it's the fact, and this is amazing, that our Lord Himself sings. Why does music occupy such a crucial role in Scripture? I mean, I get it, why the teaching of God's Word is so central in the worship of God's people. It's God's Word after all. But why music? The simple answer is because it is a huge priority to God Himself. Listen carefully, God Himself sings.

Turn to Zephaniah, it's near the end of the Old Testament, a little prophecy, Zephaniah 3. The context here, the prophet is talking about when God brings His people back from Babylon, from their captivity and reconstitutes them in the land, but then in the middle of this chapter He starts talking about the ultimate restoration that will come when Christ comes. It will come with the millennium and with the eternal future. And notice what He writes in verse 16 of Zephaniah 3.

In that day it will be said to Jerusalem:  
“Do not be afraid, O Zion;  
Do not let your hands fall limp.  
“... [Yahweh] your God is in your midst,  
A victorious warrior.  
He will exult over you with joy,  
He will be quiet in His love,  
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

Now, I love the NAS, but that really is a bad translation, that last line of verse 17. In fact, let me give you the ESV version, “He will exult over you with loud singing.” Some of you like the New Legacy Standard Bible that the Masters' Seminary has worked on. Here is the translation it gives, “He will rejoice over you with joyful singing.”

This is amazing. When we seek God, verses 12 and 13 of this chapter, when we trust in Him, verses 14 to 16, God, our God, takes personal delight in us just as He will in redeemed Israel in

the future. As one author describes it, this is not an aloof emotionless contentment, but, in verse 4, it is joyful, divine celebration. God will sing over His people when He brings them into His kingdom.

Turn to Hebrews 2, this is my favorite, Hebrews 2:10. You have got to follow His logic carefully, let me just read it, and you follow along in your copy of God's Word, Hebrews 2:10.

For it was fitting for Him [and Him here is God], for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation [that's Jesus] through sufferings. For both He [that is Jesus] who sanctifies and those who are sanctified [that's us] are all from one *Father*; for which reason He [that is Jesus] is not ashamed to call [us His brothers] ... saying [this is Jesus now talking to His brothers],

“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.” And again, “I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.” And again, “BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

This is an amazing passage. But in verse 12, the writer of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 22:22. It's one of the Messianic Psalms. It's quoted often of Jesus in the gospels. Now look at the end of verse 12, literally, in the Greek text, it reads this way, this is Jesus talking to the Father, in the middle of the assembly [that is the assembly of my brethren whom You saved]. I will [hymn] ... you. He uses the word hymn (h y m n) as a verb, I will hymn you, I will praise you, I will sing praises to you. This is amazing, Jesus sang praise to the Father while He was here, and He will lead us in the praise of the Father in eternity, and the end of verse 13 explains the reason for this praise, “BEHOLD, ... THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN [TO] ME.”

Jesus Christ, our Lord, will stand in the middle of us, a redeemed humanity, and He will sing praise to God, the Father, that the Father has given us to Him. And then we will join our Lord in His songs of praise about our redemption. It's no wonder that our redemption is one of the primary reasons for our songs now, as well.

Folks, our God sings. Do you? Do you love God centered music? Do you find yourself singing praise to God privately and personally? Do you enjoy singing with the people of God? Is music that expresses praise to God a crucial part of your life?



If not, listen carefully, it's a very, very effective spiritual diagnostic. It means either you don't have God's Spirit, or it means you're not mature in Christ. You don't understand the Word of God because what the Word of God does, as we learn more about God, is it draws out our praise and worship. We just can't help it. It's the automatic response.

If you are not allowing the Spirit to fill you with the Word richly in all wisdom, because the very first result of being filled by the Spirit is a love for God centered music. And it's God's command to us personally, privately, individually and corporately. Psalm 100:2, "Worship [Yahweh] ... with gladness, Come before Him with joyful singing."

No prayer