

Singing a New Way of Life

Thomas Robinson, "Lost in Praise 1," August 15, 2010

Colossians 3:9-17

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,
¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another,
forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.
And be thankful.

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 (*charis, grace*) in your hearts to God.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly,
instructing and counseling one another in all wisdom
through Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs,
singing with Grace in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 5:17-20

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 31:19, 21-22; 32:1-3 (God giving instructions to Moses)

¹⁹ "Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me to the people of Israel. ²¹ And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall meet them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). ²² So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel.

^{32:1} "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak,
and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

² May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew,
like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb.

³ For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is **the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The Mystery and Delight of Music

Our Congregational Retreat this year is focused around one of the central parts of our worship life - communally and individually - music, singing, worship in song and art.

Music is one of the wonders of God's creation - making humans so that simply ordering tones and sounds in ordered patterns can carry emotion, beauty, drama, delight. Music can be linked to words so that the meaning of the words is given depth, power, passion. God told Moses to create a song to be God's "unforgotten" witness to Israel (Dt 31:21).

Music reaches deep into our hearts, minds, emotions. We care about it. It's powerful. We define ourselves by the music we love. A "language" that can express almost anything. Some speak the language of music creatively, others expressively. God understands all.

What's Going On? – Music and the Work of God

Col. 3:16 links music to the heart of God's central work with us in his world: The long story of God in love transforming human life so that we may share in God's life. From prison Paul urges Christians to live lives richly filled with the truth of Christ's love. They tell each other the story of grace and draw its meaning through the psalms and songs they sing to God from their hearts filled by God's grace poured out for them. Eph 5:18 describes this as being filled with the Spirit - God actively reshaping our life.

The aesthetic pleasure and power of music help the events of God's loving/saving grace take root in the heart and find expression from the heart. It is part of the great transformation of "putting off the old self" and putting on "the new self" in the image of God. Overcoming ethnic divisions. Learning confidence and peace in God's love, that allows us to be compassionate, kind, forgiving as we have been forgiven. Living a life of genuine love, peace, and thankfulness in community with others who are different. We share a common song of Grace sung to many styles of music. It permeates everything.

Singing to Each Other Before God

Our music in this process is three-sided. We minister to each other before God. We are not an audience listening to a performance. We are engaged with each other in helping the story to take root. God is also engaged, using our words to do his work in us.

Look back over the variety of songs we have shared with each other today. They come from different periods and styles and various stories of faith. They articulate the core of our faith and express the emotional power of its transforming impact on our lives.

They link back to scriptures and the songs of scripture that have lived for millennia.

They create a new heart in us as we open ourselves to each other and to God. God's Spirit fills us and the powerful work of remaking human lives to share God's life continues.