

God Gave the Song

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John Michael Jones

Merriam-Webster defines music as a vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony. It goes on to include the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationship to produce a composition having unity and continuity. Exact definitions of music vary widely around the world, though it is an aspect of all human societies, it is a cultural universal. While scholars agree that music is defined by a few specific elements, there is no consensus on their precise definition.

Music often plays a key role in social activities, religious rituals, rites of passage ceremonies, celebrations, and other cultural activities. The modern English word "music" first came into us in the 1630's. It is derived from a long line of successive precursors: the Old English "musike" of the mid-13th century, the Old French "musique" of the 14th century; and the Latin "musica". The Latin word itself derived from the Ancient Greek meaning the "art of the Muses". It is often debated as to what extent the origins of music will be ever understood, and there are many competing theories which aim to explain it.

Prehistoric music can only be theorized based on findings from paleolithic archaeology sites. Flutes are often discovered, carved from bones in which lateral holes have been pierced, these are thought to have been blown at one end. The earliest and largest collection of prehistoric musical instruments was found in China and dates to between 7,000 and 6,600 BCE.

We could go on and on and on. There are various types of music. Early music during the medieval era, took place in the Middle Ages and started with a single melodic line chanting into the Roman Catholic Church services. In fact, the first notation of music was first introduced by the Catholic church so that the chant melodies could be written down, to facilitate the use of the same melodies for religious music across the entire Catholic empire.

Then we have the Renaissance music (1400-1600) which was more focused on secular, non-religious themes, such as courtly love.

Then we have the Baroque era of music (1600-1750) which flourished across Europe. Music truly expanded during this period not only in its range but also in its complexity. This included the first operas. During the Baroque era, we moved away from a single melodic line to multiple, simultaneous independent melody lines. During this time several major music forms were defined that lasted into later periods which were expanded and evolved further, including the fugue, the invention, the sonata, and the concerto.

Then we have the Classical period (1730-1820) which aimed to imitate the key elements of the art and philosophy of Ancient Greece and Rome: the ideals of balance, proportion, and disciplined expression. This should not be confused with Classical music which is a general term which refers to Western art music from the 5th century to the 2000's. Music from the Classical period had a lighter, clearer, and

simpler texture than the Baroque music which preceded it. The main style of the Class period music was a prominent melody along with a chordal accompaniment parts.

The Romantic music (1810-1900) from the 19th century had many elements in common with the Romantic styles in literature and painting. Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement and was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism as well as glorification of all the past and natures. Romantic music expanded beyond the rigid styles and forms of the Classical era into more passionate, dramatic expressive pieces and songs.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the focus of art music was characterized by exploration of new rhythms, styles, and sounds. The horrors of World War 1 influenced many of the arts, including music when composers began exploring darker, harsher sounds. This period also included jazz and folk music. Rock music is a genre of popular music that developed in the 1950s and 1960s which included rock and roll, blues, and country music.

Music has many elements. These elements include pitch, beat, tempo, rhythm, harmony, texture, style, allocation of voices, timbre or color, dynamics, expression, articulation, form, and structure.

Pitch is an aspect of sound that we hear. Is a tone higher or lower than another?

Melody (also called a “tune”) is a series of pitches sounding in succession, often in a rising and falling pattern.

Harmony refers to the “vertical” sounds of pitches in music, where the pitches are played or sung together at the same time to create a chord.

Rhythm is the arrangement of sounds and silences in time.

Texture is the overall sound of a piece of music or song. The texture of a piece of music is determined by how the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements are combined in a composition, which determines the overall nature of the sound in a piece.

Can you imagine worship without music? We can read the scriptures. We can read Psalms responsively. We can pray. We can have and listed to sermons. But without music, it just would not be the same.

There is so much to consider in music. By now, I am sure that you are wondering where this is all going. Before I explain more. I also want to give you the definition of the word “song”. A song is a musical composition intended to be performed by the human voice.

I would like to first focus on music in the Bible. Religion and music historian Herbert Lockyer, Jr. writes that “music, both vocal and instrumental, was well cultivated among the Hebrews, the New Testament Christians, and the Christian church through the centuries. He adds that “a look at the Old Testament reveals how God’s ancient people were devoted to the study and practice of music, which holds a unique place in the historical and prophetic books, as well as the Psalter.”

Did you know that there are 1150 verses in the Bible which reference a form related to music. These include music, melody, song, hymn, instrument, sound, play, blow, noise, psalm, harp, lyre, timbrel, trumpet, horn, and voice.

King David first used the music for religious ritual. He is credited with confirming the men of the Tribe of Levi as the “custodians of the music of the divine service”. If we were able to step into the biblical period, we would find a culture filled with music, where people used music in their daily lives. Such music could express a great variety of moods, feelings, joy, and sorrow, hope and fear, faith and doubt and were found in the wealth of songs and psalms and in the diverse melodies of the people.

The origin of music is unknown as it occurred prior to recorded history. But I suggest to you that as we read in Genesis 1 that in the beginning was God and God created everything in seven-days. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

God had created man and woman and provided them everything they could ever want or need. It was an idyllic existence. Who would not be happy with it. But as it typical in all human life, we are just never happy. We want more. More money, more power, more prestige, more things. And yet, look around today, we has so much and we are still not happy.

And through this unhappiness and quest for more, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. God forbade them to eat the fruit of a tree in the garden, but they disobeyed and as a result, sinned. By sinning, Adam and Eve severed their relationship with God. So too our sin separates us from God. Isaiah 59:2 says, “The very errors of you people have become the things causing division between you and your God, and your own sins have caused the concealing of his face from you to keep from hearing.”

You might say that through sinning, we lost our music. We lost the right to live in paradise, we lost the right to fellowship with God, and we lost our eternal life. The thing is, God never stopped loving us.

God knows all things, all past things, all present things, and all future things. God then knew Adam and Eve would sin but had prepared for it before they were even created. God’s music is Jesus, and Jesus is our song. This song became flesh and dwelt among us. In John 1, we John testified to this by crying out, saying “This is the one I spoke about when I said, “He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.” The true song was coming into the world. But scripture tells us that we did not recognize this song. Why?

I think John 3:16 says it best. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” In this homily this morning, I propose that God’s Son is God’s Song. And did you know that John 3:16 is the most quoted verse in the whole Bible.

God sent His Song to save us. Our sin separated us from God. There is a debt that needs to be paid. But rather than letting us pay it ourself, Jesus takes it on himself. He took our place and paid the price we deserved to pay. What a powerful Song.

But did we hear the Song? Yes, God gave the Song. As Gaither puts it so perfectly. It has always been with us. The Song came into our world through a manger – a manger in Bethlehem.

It was a simple song – a simple, lovely song for every one of us.

Right from the first, we tried to ignore the song. People said, “There is no song! It simply does not exist.

Others just tried to change the tune.

They made laws to stop it.
Armies marched against it.
They killed some who sang the song.
They screamed at in fury.
They tried to drown it out.
Finally, they nailed that song to a tree. A cross.

And, they said to themselves...."There....that should take care of that."

But it didn't. Jesus arose three days later just had been told. Jesus' death and resurrection shows God's redemption through his Son, Jesus Christ, our Song. Now we can have God's salvation. We must hear the Song, we must accept the song, we must practice the Song, and we must play the song for others to hear.

We know of many in the Bible who heard the music. For many of these were told to us as kids. In the Old Testament we heard of Moses on Mount Sinai. Noah who built the ark. Daniel in the Lion's Den. Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. There were those who heard the song in the New Testament; John the Baptist, the woman at the well, Nicodemus, the Pharisee. Scripture is filled with those who heard the Song.

How does one begin to hear the song?

Acts 16:31 says "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. The Christian message of salvation is simple enough for everyone to understand, but deep enough for a lifetime of study.

God's music is simple. Believe in the Song. The reality of salvation is that it is both a miracle and it is incredibly simple. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are saved. Period. To believe in Jesus, our Song, means to trust in Him. To be united to Him by faith. To cry out to Him.

And just as the thief on the cross said to Jesus, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom", Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise". This thief heard the Song.

We all know we live in an evil world. All around us we see the evidence that God's Song is getting softer and softer and softer. To the point that it is hard to hear. We must hold on to our Song. It takes work! We must work to keep our hearts right with God.

It takes preparation. We must practice. We cannot get better with our Song unless we practice. Practice is required for it provides us with the ability to stay focused, to improve, to strive to reach the goal line.

How do we do this?

Spend time with God. To grow and stay strong, we must spend time with God by studying his word, praying, and singing spiritual songs. We should take time each day to read, meditated and think about what God's music, our Song is saying to us.

We must pray. Prayers do not have to be long, drawn-out repetitions. Short prayers offered throughout the day while doing other things are necessary. This is part of practicing. You do not learn a piece of

music in one setting. You break it down into small pieces, you dissect it and study it until you know it. Then you commit it to memory.

Then sing your melody. Sing it loud and sing it strong. Let others hear your melody. Sing it so that others might hear and know the Song.

Why did we sing Sunday School songs today. Why did we have some fun in worship? To have faith, we must think, wonder, and believe like a child. Childlike faith is an innocent, humble faith that believes and trusts. Any adult can dress up, but children make it an adventure. They put on a new self and believe they are transformed. Author Dave Jenkins explains, Jesus does not have an upper-echelon in-crowd or “adults only” policy. He describes in Matthew 18 that unless we repent of vying for “All-star” status and instead take the lowly position of God’s children, we cannot even enter the kingdom.

Do you still hear God’s music? Do you hear the Song? If not, ask God to search your heart. God did not create you to hide. If you are wanting to hear the Song loud and strong again, Give God your whole heart.

Seek wonder. We get so caught up in our daily life rituals and routines that we drown out the song. Stop and sing one of your favorite hymns of the faith. I assure you; you will hear and find something way bigger than you. Let it overwhelm your soul with awe.

Express love. Children are naturally huggers. In fact, they are masters of the running-leap-and-hug method. Tell God you love him. Tell the world you love God. Lead others to the Song. Shout it out and give it. This is truly a song that the world needs to hear.

What is that I hear. I still hear that music; Do you?

I still hear the Song. Day after day, I sing my melody, it goes on and on. For since I came to know the source of music through the Song, I always hear it because I know, God Gave the Song.