

O come, let us sing unto the Lord
1 Chronicles 16:8-9 and 23-25

Today, as part of Religious Music Week, we are celebrating Music Sunday. Religious Music Week is held the last full week of September, celebrating the ministry of music in all places of worship. This is a time for congregations to thank the musicians who provide sacred music and help them to reach out into the community, drawing ever more people to the worship of the Lord, our God.

I congratulate and thank you, members of the Choir, for your eagerness to sing to the Lord and contribute your gifts, talents, and strengths to our worship service. May the Lord be pleased by your devotion and bless your lives.

We have two reasons to hold Music Sunday today; the one is to thank the talented men and women in our congregation who provide music for our worship service throughout the year; and the other one is to have a time of dedication of choir members to God. Choir members are chosen people by the Lord to sing the Lord representing our hearts.

Music is an awesome ability to communicate with God and among the people. If you can read music you can communicate anybody in the world through the music. I had an embarrassing experience ten years ago that began with the question: "Can you read English?" That was so embarrassing moment to me.

My wife and I were traveling with my sister, who was visiting me from Korea. We were looking for a place to go fishing near Glenwood Springs, Colorado. I found a small fishing and tackle shop, and I stopped in to ask the clerk where I could find a fishing pond nearby. The young man at the counter looked at me, and as he handed me a guide book, he asked, "Can you read English?" Another man beside him then said, "He is speaking English to us. How can you ask that?" The clerk replied, "Who knows? He may or may not read English!"

That was an embarrassing question to me. I didn't know how to despond for that question. For a moment I kept quiet and then I replied, showing him my glasses, "Oh! Reading English? That's why I'm carrying these magic glasses. With these glasses I can read English, German, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese, and Korean. Won't you try on my glasses?" At this, the clerk's friend laughed out loud.

I am able to read several foreign languages. But besides these, I can read another language, which is music. Music is a wonderful language, a universal language. Among the many languages, God loves this language, music, most. You, choir members speak awesome language to communicate with God. You are participating in ministry of music. You have awesome job which can not be fired, and be continued to the heaven.

The ministry of music is an essential part of our religious life. Through song, we worship the Lord, our God; we give thanks, we ask for blessings, we renew our faith, and we express the joy of Christian fellowship. Worship without music is unthinkable.

I would like to speak about worship through music in three dimensions: in relation to God, to my neighbors, and to myself. We have these three dimensions of relationship in worship service.

First of all, we glorify God our Lord through music, which is the essence of worship. Both worship and music exist for glorifying our God. To glorify our God is our ultimate fulfillment in worship and music. Man is created by God for His glory. We are here to worship and glorify God.

We read the scripture from 1 Chronicles 16:8-9, 23-25, which is David's Psalm of Thanks. He said, "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done." He sang of God's wonderful acts.

Do you know about David's life? David had 19 sons and one daughter who are named in Scripture. These children were all born to his wives. In addition, he had numerous unnamed sons and daughters born to wives and concubines (2 Sam 3:2-5, 5:13-16). I don't know whether David was happy or not with so many children, wives, and concubines. I imagine that David must have had serious family troubles. One of his sons, Absalom, became his enemy who took the kingship and tried to kill his father. Another one of his sons killed his brother, and another son raped his sister. What a painful tragedy it was!

As a shepherd, a priest, prophet, soldier, the state-man, and finally King, David had both bad and good experiences: sufferings, agonies, moments of danger, threats, feelings of guilt, triumph, assurances, joy and happiness. Nevertheless, he became a great king in the history of Israel. He learned that in all circumstances, God was with him, and did wonderful acts for him. That's why David said, "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done." To give thanks to God, and to glorify his name, is the heart of worship. That is the job of the choir and of the people of God.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, also gave thanks to God the Father. Jesus taught his disciples about the Kingdom of God, and gave them power and authority to exorcise spirits, and sent them to the village. Seventy emissaries were sent two by two into the village by Jesus. And the seventy returned with joy - their mission had been successful - and Jesus sees in their triumph a sign of the reality and the imminence of God's kingdom. In ecstasy he cried, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Taking their report of success, Jesus told the disciples; "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The real source of the disciples' satisfaction must be not the consciousness of having great powers or authority, but the awareness of belonging to God in Christ." Our Lord, Jesus Christ, gave thanks and praise to God for his disciples. We praise God also, "Not because what we have but because whose we are."

We know the story of Paul and Silas in Acts. They were put into prison without any valid reason. However, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God at midnight, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. (Acts 16:25-26)

Sing unto God whenever and wherever you meet hard circumstances. There is a way to overcome by singing to God. And when we glorify God, that is most important moment for transformation our life. That is our intention in our worship service.

Second, another important aspect of worship is that we edify our brothers and sisters. We glorify God in worship one hand, and we edify others in other hand. While we are singing we feel oneness with others in music. We worship God with our brothers and sisters. We need to glorify God on one hand and we need to keep peace with others on other hand when we worship God.

Jesus told us, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

And also Jesus told us: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

C. S. Lewis, in his book, *Christian Reflections*, discusses the topic of how to glorify God. He explains, as an example, a problem that the Corinthian church had in their worship. Some members in Corinthian church ignored the importance of edification in religious life.

There was an issue in terms of speaking in tongues in public worship. In Corinthians 14, St. Paul points out that the man who is inspired to speak in an unknown tongue may do very well, as far as he himself is concerned, but will not profit the congregation unless his utterance can be translated. Speaking in tongues is a spiritual phenomenon in worship, while freely communication among the congregation is the content of worship. Thus glorifying and edifying may come to be opposed.

These two goals, of edifying and glorifying, seem to me to be related, but in the following way. Whenever we edify, we glorify, but when we glorify we do not always edify. The edification of the people is an act of charity and obedience and therefore in itself a glorification of God. But it is possible for a man to glorify God in modes that do not edify his neighbor. This fact confronted the Church at an early stage in her career, in the phenomenon called 'speaking with tongues'.

In other word, if somebody is glorifying God, and then ignoring and hating others it is not truly worship God.

Not only the words in worship, but also the acts in worship should be edifying.

Paul's encouragement to the Philippians was: "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." That is true edification to others. That is the spirit of worship.

Thirdly, in relation to myself, submitting myself to God makes worship worthy. Even though David was king of Israel he submitted himself to God. The heart of worship is surrender. Surrender is an unpopular word, disliked almost as much as the word submission. It implies losing, and no one wants to be a loser. Paul urges us to fully surrender our lives to God in worship: "So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us...offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God. Dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer."

The purpose of designating today 'Music Sunday' is to dedicate the members of our choir to God. True worship, which is bringing God pleasure, happens when you give yourself completely to God. Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about. There are three barriers that block our total surrender to God: fear, pride, and confusion.

Trust is an essential ingredient to surrender. You won't surrender to God unless you trust him, but you can't trust him until you surrender to God. That is a paradox. Trusting and surrendering comes suddenly together when we realize who God is.

When we accept our limitations we realize who God is. C S Lewis observed, "The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become -- because he made us."

The most difficult area to surrender for many people is their money. Many think, "I want to live for God but I also want to earn enough money to live comfortably and retire someday." Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money." And "wherever your treasure is, your heart will be also."

As Joshua approached the biggest battle of his life, he encountered God, fell in worship before him, and surrendered his plans. That surrender led to a stunning victory at Jericho. This is the paradox: Victory comes through surrender. Surrender doesn't weaken you; it strengthens you. Surrender to God, and you don't have to fear or surrender to anything else.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, one confessed, "When I was a young man, I made a contract with God. I literally wrote it out and signed my name at the bottom. It said, "From this day forward, I am a slave of Jesus Christ." He became a leader who led 150 million people to Christ.

God wants all of you. God doesn't want a part of your life. He asks for all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength. When you submit yourself to

God, He will use you better than you have planned for your life. That's why we are here and worship God.

During the filming of the movie classic Quo Vadis, Deborah Kerr, one of the stars, was asked by a newspaper reporter, "During the scene when you were in the arena facing the lions, were you afraid?" She answered, "Oh no! I wasn't afraid at all! You see, I had read the script, and I knew Robert Taylor would come and save me!" The Bible is the script of our life. We don't need to be afraid because, we know God is with us and save us. In that confidence, we can praise God whenever and wherever we are.

In other words, to glorify God worship should make sense to the people. We should use our language in worship to be understandable to others. Even if our prayer is offered to God, we should use language in prayer that is understandable to others as well.

One of the great personalities of the early church was Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." Barnabas was a significant leader because he lived out his name. He was an encourager. We in the church ought to be modern-day Barnabases - the sons and daughters of encouragement -- people who listen, who care, who affirm; people who help and support one another; people who lift up and hold up and build up.

Surrendered people are the ones God uses. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus, not because she was talented or wealthy or beautiful, but because she was totally surrendered to him.