

Three Songs of Love  
Song of Solomon 2:8-13  
Psalm 45:1-9  
James 1:17-27

Today, we celebrate Share the Music Sunday – a day when we are all called to offer our hearts to God with music. Wherever there is music, there is also peace, harmony, and comfort. Music is a universal language, one that we can use to communicate with God. God gave us music to add joy to our lives and also to help us live in harmony with others. May the Lord grant us His peace, comfort, and strength through our music and worship this morning!

Music is as old as human history. When we read Genesis, we learn that there was musical activity from the beginning of human life. Now the early humans were not completely good. They were often guilty of jealousy and hatred towards each other. But they used music to purify their hearts and their lives. In Genesis 4:21, we read about Jubal, who was a descendant of Cain (the world's first murderer who killed his brother Abel). Jubal invented the first musical instruments, and played the harp and the flute.

Music has always been an important part of human life. It can soothe a crying child or a restless flock of sheep. Music can teach us how to celebrate, and to express our joy and contentment in life. Music also can sublimate our sorrows, anguish, pain, and worries into new hope and energy for life.

Music can also cast out evil spirits, to bring us calm and peace of mind. As a young man, David played his harp for King Saul when he was agitated and his heart was filled with evil spirits. As David played his harp, the King's heart was soothed and calmed.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? When Jerusalem was captured by the King of Babylon, the Israelites were taken from their city and exiled in Babylon for seventy years. This was a traumatic time for the Israelites, and each day they longed to return to their homeland. Their life in captivity was hard, sorrowful, and should have been hopeless. But still they sang for hope at the riverbank of Babylon. When they finally heard the news that the Lord will be bringing the captives back to Zion, they sang again. This song is recorded in Psalm 126. They were like men who dreamed. Their mouths were filled with laughter, their tongues with songs of joy. They praised the Lord, singing: "The Lord has done great things for us."

Now-a-days, music is also used as therapy. Music therapy can lessen chronic pain, such as arthritis. Studies show that listening to music daily also reduces depression and relieves stress. Music is a channel that can carry one's heart to another and also to God.

The word “love” is the most powerful, and probably the most misunderstood, word in the world. Part of the problem is that we use this one word to describe many things. We water down its meaning by overuse. I love my wife. I love America. I would love a back massage. We use the word love in so many different ways that it has literally lost its meaning.

There are many types of love in the world. In Greek, there are five different words for love. Eros is the passionate love between man and woman. Philia is a friendly love, like that between friends, Storge is an affectionate love, like the love that parents have for their children. And Xenia is a hospitable love, as between host and guest, or the general love one feels for a stranger. In essence, all these different types of love are good.

Love is the probably the subject of most songs and music. Love songs are the most popular songs in the world. Today we read three songs of love from our scripture readings: a love song between a man and woman from the Song of Solomon, a song of love for the king in Psalms, and a song of love and faith in God from the book of James. According to our scripture readings, there are at least three kinds of love.

First, there is exclusive love between husband and wife. Our reading, from the Song of Solomon (2:8-13) shows us a picture of a man and a woman, each waiting with anticipation to meet their beloved. In the reading, we can feel their intimate relationship, and hear their expressions of affection. They affirm their love for each other exclusively, and tell each other how wonderful they think they are. There is true beauty and goodness in their exclusive love for each other.

Mark Twain once said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” The primary language of passionate love is words of affirmation. “You look great in that dress.” “You must be a best man in the world.” Don’t be stingy with your compliments to each other. It costs nothing. But its effect is great.

There is a second type of love from our readings, the universal love of Jesus’ teachings, “Love your neighbor as yourself” is the commandment that Jesus gave us. Psalm 45:1-9 is the song of love that is offered to the King. The King is someone that the people are supposed to love. But according to Jesus, both the King and the ordinary people equally deserve to be loved. We should not only love those who are lovable, but also those who are not very lovable.

In universal love, we can replace the word love with care, concern, or respect. Universal love asks us to think loving thoughts of others. What does it mean to think loving thoughts? It means to focus on other people’s needs, hurts, problems, desires, and goals, not just our own. As the old saying goes, it is easier to understand someone else when we walk a mile in their shoes. Hurt people hurt people. If someone is hurting

you, that person is doing so because he or she is hurting. We need to look beyond people's faults and see their needs. Then we can learn to love.

Third, there is the ultimate and unconditional love from God. Before we can love others, we must feel and understand how deeply God loves us. Ephesians 3:17-18 says, "I pray that Christ will be within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; to experience this love for yourselves." Jesus said, "Love each other as I have loved you." God's love through Jesus to us is the model of ultimate love. God's love is the living love, like water that is drawn from a deep well. Those who are loved by God can love others truly.

True love has its origin in the experiences of God's love. The Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn was once asked why his church music was so full of gladness. And Haydn replied, "I cannot make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts I feel; when I think upon my God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, I can do no other than serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

God's love is here when we worship God with all heart and mind strength. Let's dance with God who is with us. And let us affirm our faith as the Apostle Paul told us; "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." That is our love offering to God.