

Sermon for Sunday, October 18, 1981 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"THE SONG GOD WANTS YOU TO SING"

Ephesians 5:15-20

Text: "And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing and making melodies to the Lord with all your heart."
Ephesians 5:18,19

My time this morning is very limited, but there are several things I would like for us to think together about. The first thing I want to say is this: corporate singing is extremely important in the stream of human events. Do you realize every great movement has been moved along by singing? For example, The French Revolution was carried along on the wings of the "Marseillaise." Again, the communistic movement swept down the streams of history singing the "Internationale." Or look at Hitler's Germany. That nation was swept along with their leader marching in step to "Horst Wessel." Here in our own country, during the Civil War the Union Troops eventually marched to the sea through Georgia singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic". Even in recent times we saw the civil rights movement of the 60's and 70's gain strength and courage as the marches of that era moved to the tune of "We shall overcome." As one poet has put it:

One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a song's new measure
Can trample an empire down.

(Arthur W. E. O'Shaughnessy, in his poem, "ode")

So singing is important. Great movements are carried along by song. And from the beginning this has been true of the Christian faith. About 112 A.D. a historian named Pliny wrote about those early Christians and this is one of the things he said, "(the Christians) were accustomed on a fixed day to gather before daybreak and to sing antiphonally a hymn to Christ as to a god." (Letters X.96) This means that in the long run, the Church will be carried forward by her singing. For example, at the time of the Protestant reformation, singing had largely been lost by the Church. Yet, when Luther broke with Rome he restored singing to the congregation and the Reformation moved forward on song.

This being the case, we must pay close attention to the Bible when it says in our text for this morning that Christians are to make melody to the Lord. If we are to move the Church forward on song, the focus of our singing must be on the Lord. That means that the Church must guard its music carefully. It means that our singing must not focus on ourselves or on the world but on the Lord.

The second thing I want to say this morning is this: music can directly affect character. To put it another way, music can be used to create a mood. For example, playing marches can create a martial mood. A great chorale can produce a sense of awe. A sentimental melody can create a feeling of nostalgia. And some of the tunes and lyrics of our modern popular music can create social rebellion or promote a breakdown in standards of morality. What impact is the music of America having on our mood and our character?

But the Bible says that we are to make melody to the Lord with all of our heart. A church which is a singing church and which is making melody to the Lord with its heart is a church that is moving forward, a church that is serving the Lord, inspiring the hearts of people and drawing men to him.

There is just one other thing I want to say this morning. There is a deep hunger in the lives of people today for fellowship. And in one sense of the word, the cocktail bar and the cocktail party have become the secular substitute for the church. You see, man does not live by bread alone. He longs for fellowship. He yearns for closeness with others. And alcohol helps to break down his barriers and his inhibitions. But the enthusiasm and joy modern man looks for won't be found in a bottle or a cocktail glass. No, it will be found in that close relationship that men and women have to one another in the Lord.

You know, I always thought it was interesting that when the Holy Spirit fell on Pentecost, the believers were accused of being drunk. They said shockingly, "They are filled with new wine." Such joy is associated with drunkenness. Well, in one sense of the word, they were filled with a new wine--it was the wine of the Holy Spirit. It gave them that joy and enthusiasm everyone was looking for. But as long as men stand outside the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit, they will look for substitutes.

Are there substitutes in your life this morning--is there a longing for joy and enthusiams in life--is there longing for those deep, close relationships that bring meaning to life? It may be that you need a taste of the new wine this morning--the wine of the Holy Spirit that brings joy and sets you free to dancing. You see, as long as anyone stands outside the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit, he will search longingly for some substitute that will fill his need. Unfortunately, he will never find it.

Whoever you are this morning, if God has touched your heart through this music, you have been given a glimpse of the joy the Lord wants to put in your heart. Maybe it hasn't worked. Why don't you try the real thing--why don't you try him?